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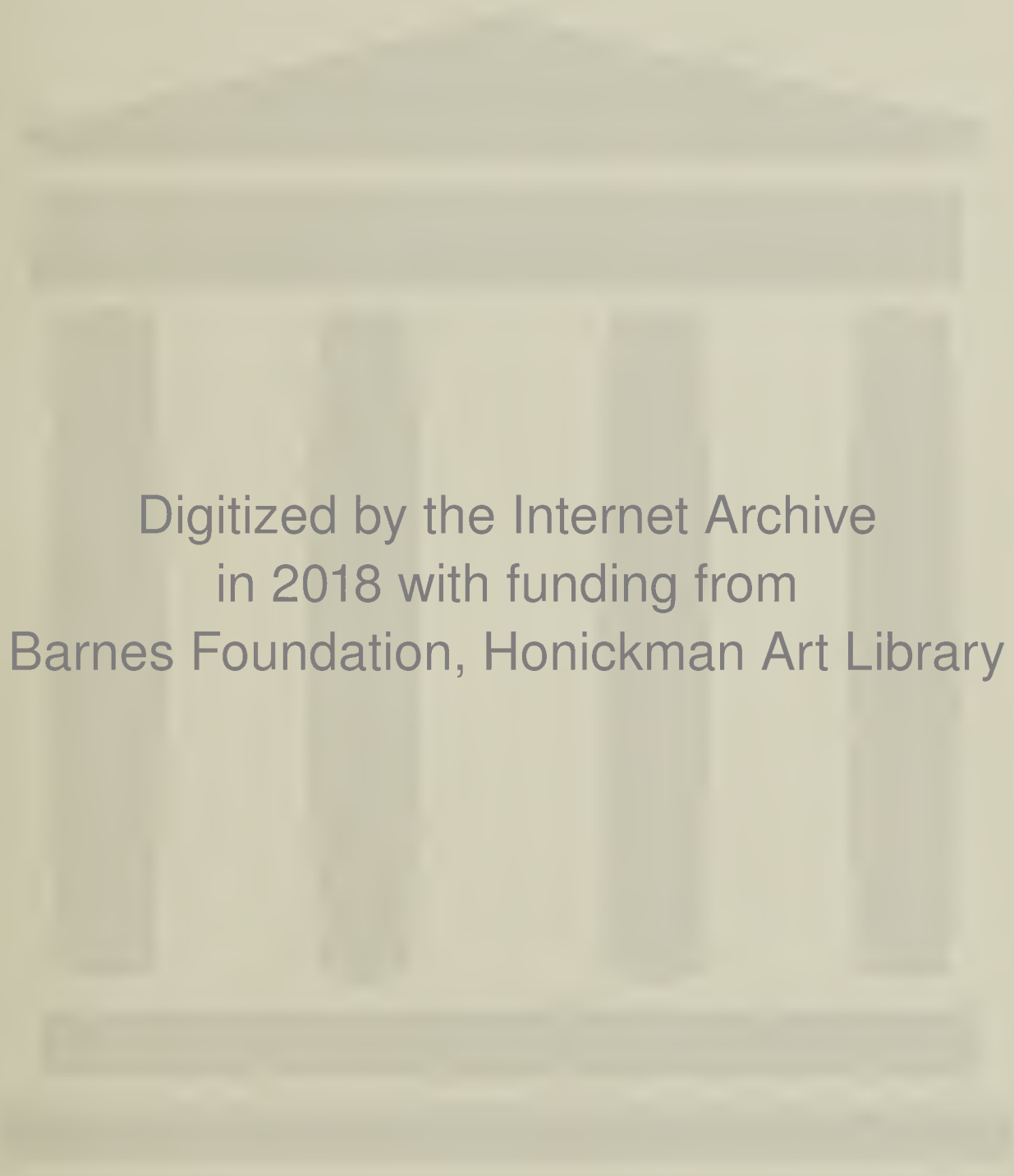


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THE ART IN PAINTING



*Publications of  
The Barnes Foundation Press*

AN APPROACH TO ART

*MARY MULLEN*

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

*LAURENCE BUERMAYER*

*Publications of  
Harcourt, Brace and Company*

THE ART IN PAINTING

*ALBERT C. BARNES*

PRIMITIVE NEGRO SCULPTURE

*PAUL GUILLAUME*

*THOMAS MUNRO*







Cézanne

Barnes Foundation



# THE ART IN PAINTING

BY

ALBERT C. BARNES

*ONE HUNDRED AND SIX ILLUSTRATIONS*



NEW YORK  
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY



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TO  
JOHN DEWEY

WHOSE CONCEPTIONS  
OF EXPERIENCE, OF METHOD, OF EDUCATION,  
INSPIRED THE WORK OF WHICH  
THIS BOOK IS A PART





## PREFACE

THIS book represents an effort to set forth briefly the salient features of a systematic study of both old and modern paintings that extended over a period of fifteen years. The experience developed a method that gave results so encouraging that regular courses embodying it have been installed at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and at Columbia University, New York; it is followed also in classes conducted in numerous public galleries, including the Louvre, Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

At the Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania, the plan is being further developed and applied in seminars, lectures, demonstrations and classes for teachers of art, painters, writers and non-professional people. The method comprises the observation of facts, reflection upon them, and the testing of the conclusions by their success in application. It stipulates that an understanding and appreciation of paintings is an experience that can come only from contact with the paintings themselves. It emphasizes the fact that the terms "understanding," "appreciation," "art," "interest," "experience," have precise meanings that are inseparable parts of the method. It offers something basically objective to replace the sentimentalism, the antiquarianism, sheltered under the cloak of academic prestige, which make futile the present courses in art in universities and colleges generally.

From the earliest times down to our own age, the traditions of painting, like those of science, have been in a constant state of evolution, and their determinants have always been the prevailing conditions of culture. The arid periods in history were characterized always by slavish imitation of previous traditions which, in their own age, were living embodiments of human values. The aridity disappeared, and the traditions were modified, when greater men recognized that the vitality of a custom consists precisely in its representing the spirit of its age. No tradition has ever persisted unchanged and no sound tradition has ever completely disappeared; these facts admit of no question in the

## PREFACE

history of painting. The traditions of previous ages have always been the foundation stones upon which new developments are based, even though that truth has been generally unrecognized at the time. Important creators have usually suffered grievous wrongs through the blindness of their contemporaries, and our own age is living up to that historical record. A person who professes to understand and appreciate Titian and Michel Angelo and who fails to recognize the same traditions in the moderns, Renoir and Cézanne, is practicing self-deception. Similarly, an understanding of early Oriental art and of El Greco carries with it an appreciation of the contemporary work of Matisse and Picasso. These modern and contemporary painters have merely added contributions of their own, just as Titian and Michel Angelo, El Greco and the Orientals, founded their work upon the traditions of their predecessors.

In this book an effort is made to trace in the history of painting the essential continuity of the great traditions and to show that the best of the modern painters use the same means, to the same general ends, as did the great Florentines, Venetians, Dutchmen and Spaniards. To show that continuity, it has been necessary to analyze the plastic forms of the principal painters from the dawn of the Italian Renaissance down to the present day. Historical data are treated as merely incidental: no attempt has been made to present a complete summary of the history of painting, although no important movement and no really first-class artist has been entirely left out of account in the general evaluations.

The summaries of characteristics of the work of the artists treated, and the analyses of the particular paintings mentioned, are compiled exclusively from my own observations recorded in notes made in front of the paintings themselves. The plan thus offers a method of approach, as well as a test of its value in the presence of objective facts.

It is not assumed that the conclusions reached with regard to particular paintings are the only ones compatible with the use of the method: any one of them is of course subject to revision. What is claimed is that the method gives results as objective as possible within any field of aesthetic experience and that it reduces to a minimum the rôle of merely personal and arbitrary preference. Preference will always remain, but its existence is consistent with a much higher degree of objective judgment than at present prevails. Our intention is to offer a type of analysis

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which should lead to the elimination of the prevailing habit of judging paintings by either academic rules or emotional irrelevancy. In other words, this book is an experiment in the adaptation to plastic art of the principles of scientific method. So far as I know, the plan as a whole is new. The technique, in its general psychological and logical aspects, is derived from Dewey's monumental work in the development of scientific method. For the underlying principles of the psychology of aesthetics I owe much to Santayana and to my associate, Laurence Buermeyer. To Mr. Buermeyer I am indebted also for his fine services in bringing into orderly arrangement my scattered notes relating to the paintings in the galleries of Europe and in our own collection. My other associates, Mary Mullen, N. E. Mullen and L. V. Geiger, have also rendered much valuable service in connection with the book and the educational plan out of which it grew.

ALBERT C. BARNES.

MERION, PA., January, 1926.





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BOOK I  
INTRODUCTION





## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION

THE object of this book is to endeavor to correlate in the simplest possible form the main principles that underlie the intelligent appreciation of the paintings of all periods of time. We shall seek to show, briefly, what is involved in aesthetic experience in general; after that, to give an account of the principles by which painting may be judged and so intelligently enjoyed; finally, to illustrate those principles by applying them to particular painters and tendencies in painting.

The approach to the problem of appreciation of art is made difficult by the unconscious habits and preconceptions which come to us from contact with a society which is but little interested in art. When other interests, such as those of a practical, sentimental or moral nature, directly affect the aesthetic interest, they are more likely than not to lead it astray, and the result is what may be called a confusion of values. Before trying to tell what the proper excellence in a painting is, we must make clear what it undeniably is *not*.

We miss the function of a painting if we look to it either for literal reproduction of subject-matter or for information of a documentary character. Mere imitation knows nothing of what is essential or characteristic, and documentary information is equally far afield. The camera records physical characteristics but can show nothing of what is beneath the surface. We ask of a work of art that it reveal to us what is profound, what significant qualities in objects and situations have the power to move us aesthetically. The artist must open our eyes to what unaided we could not see. In order to do that, the painter often needs to modify the familiar appearance of things and so make something which is, in the photographic sense, a bad likeness. All we can ask of a painter is whether, for example, in a landscape, he has caught the spirit of the scene; in a portrait, if he has discovered what is essential or characteristic of the sitter. And these are obviously matters for judgment, not for photographic reproduction or documentary cataloguing. Another popular mis-

## INTRODUCTION

conception is that a painter is expected to tell a story and is to be judged by his ability to make the story edifying or entertaining. This is not unnatural, since we are interested in real things because they play a part in the story which is life. A real work of art may, incidentally, tell a story, but error arises when we try to judge it by the narrative, or the moral pointed, instead of by the manner in which the artist has used his materials—color, line, space—to produce a work of plastic art; when, in other words, a literary or moral value has been mistaken for a plastic value.

Another error scarcely less destructive to genuine aesthetic appreciation is that which mistakes technical proficiency for artistic significance. Art is not only an expression of the artist's creative spirit, but also a kind of handicraft, a skill in employing a special technique. As in other handicrafts, some natural ability combined with instruction and practice may enable a person to handle a paint-brush; but it is certain that there are hundreds of capable craftsmen in paint for one real artist. It is not especially difficult to learn to recognize the devices, "the tricks of the trade," by which great painters secured their effects; but it *is* difficult to recognize greatness in these effects, to distinguish between professional competence and artistic genius. To look merely for professional competence in painting is academicism; it is to mistake the husk for the kernel, the shadow for the substance.

This error is really more serious than that of confusing photographic likeness or story-telling with art values, because the novice usually knows that he is a novice and is willing to learn, but the academician supposes himself to have learned already, and his mind is usually closed to the existence of anything but technique. With his eyes fixed upon the forms in which the living spirit of the past has embodied itself, he neglects the contemporary manifestations of that spirit, and often refuses to see or acknowledge them when they are pointed out to him. This is the reason why the most formidable enemy of new movements in art has always been, not the indifferent public, but the hostile academician. The public does not know that what he says applies only to technique, and not to art itself, and is correspondingly impressed. His motive need not, of course, be a conscious motive, and doubtless often is not. The mere fact of novelty, to one who has systematically addressed himself to the old and

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION

familiar things, is an irritation. It challenges precious habits, it threatens to overturn judgments with which the academician has identified himself, and which are in consequence dear to him. Pride joins hands with natural human inertia to oppose what is living in the interest of what is dead.

What we have said so far is almost purely negative and the result is likely to be bewilderment. The positive phase of the problem is that of the formation of a set of new habits which would develop the attitude of searching in the painting for what is of value *in itself*, avoiding the extraneous matters above discussed. The problem of seeing and the problem of judging, however, are ultimately but one; that is, we learn to see what a picture is, by learning what it ought to be. Consequently, a statement of the standard by which plastic art is to be judged is also a statement of the method by which it is to be observed.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ROOTS OF ART

IN order to indicate the attitude, the point of view, from which works of art must be approached, if their specifically aesthetic quality is to be perceived, a brief statement of psychological fundamentals is necessary.

Everything that human beings do is ultimately dependent upon the feelings that things and acts awaken in them. There are pleasant experiences and unpleasant, and we all seek the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant. This is a tendency which needs no justification. Human beings are so constituted as to have preferences, and in the last analysis these preferences are something behind which we cannot go. Our feelings, if not irrational, are at least non-rational. In the long run, everything that we do is done for the sake of some experience intrinsically enjoyable, and even when we are compelled to accept pain and privation, we do so for the sake of a positive value which outweighs their unpleasantness.

To say that an experience is of positive value, that it is worth having for its own sake, is to say that in it an instinctive prompting finds fulfillment.<sup>1</sup> To eat when we are hungry, to turn away from what disgusts us, to be victorious when our will is pitted against that of another, are things good in their own right; they are satisfactions of instincts and are enjoyed immediately, for their own sake. Of course, the enjoyment is greater when what is desired satisfies more than one instinct. Victory means the immediate experience of triumph; it may also mean the accomplishment of remoter ends which have an instinctive appeal of their own; and the confluence of these separate satisfactions heightens our enjoyment in the experience of victory. In general, the ideal is approached as our emotions are harmoniously united in every act. Then every experience gains value from all the resources of our nature, and suffers loss from no sense of desire thwarted or damage done to any of the interests which we have at heart.

The enjoyment of art is one of the experiences which are de-

<sup>1</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*, pp. 13, 14.

## THE ROOTS OF ART

sirable for their own sake. It is, of course, capable of acquiring other values also. It may enable us to make a living; it may improve our morals or quicken our religious faith; but if we attempt to judge a work of art directly by its contribution to these ends, we have abandoned the track. A work of art presents to the spectator an opportunity to live through an experience which by its own quality vouches for its right to existence, and whatever other value it has depends upon this value. If it lacks this, it is a counterfeit.

Art, in other words, is one of the ways in which instinct finds satisfaction. It is not the ordinary way of instinctive satisfaction, however, since picture, statue, or musical composition prompts us to no course of practical action. Our response to art takes the form of understanding, entering into the spirit of it, awakening in ourselves, in varying degrees, the experience of the artist. This involves effort and entails fatigue; work is done, the process is active and not passive; but the action does not, directly, produce effects in the real world. Hence art is satisfaction of instincts, but with a marked difference; and our next problem is to see what this difference is.

The word most important at this point is "interest." "Interest" implies concern, not with ourselves, but with objective things, and concern which is permanent. A real interest is an identification of ourselves with something which is real independently of us, as when we speak of interest in music, in the work of Beethoven, or in another individual. It is, furthermore, comparatively enduring. Its essential characteristic is that it induces him who has it to take pains, to make efforts, and so to order his activities that the object of his interest takes form in his mind and becomes the propelling force of his activities. Persistence of effort is the indispensable condition of real interest. When this is lacking, we say that a professed interest is a sham or at least a delusion. A man who believes that he is interested in paintings, but who takes no pains to acquaint himself with the problems to be solved, who will not study the methods of presentation proposed, form some judgment through actual experience of their adequacy, is a mere dilettante.

That in which we have no real interest passes before our eyes without entering the range of our attention or leaving any traces in our memory. What has value for us—and this is an alternative expression for "what interests us"—is attended to in detail, and



## INTRODUCTION

remembered. In general, the object of an interest has distinctness in its parts and coherence as a whole, and in consequence it arouses a specific emotion, appropriate to it as an individual thing, and not a mere mood, a vague, undistinguished sense of exhilaration, languor, lachrymosity, ineffability, or what not. One who goes to a symphony orchestra concert to pass the time, or for social reasons, comes away with only the haziest ideas of what was played. But for one with a genuine interest in music, the concert means a series of intricate relationships between chords, melodies and movements, all woven into a unified whole which reveals the spirit of the composer. In other words, art is an expression of interest, and that interest depends upon the sensibility which makes us alive in the real world to things that to one not sensitive would not exist.

The foregoing statements indicate that instincts become effective realities only as they become organized interests. Such interests center about and develop real things; they also make up the individual self. The self is shadowy, insubstantial, futile, except in so far as it has objective interests; but it is also true that the objective world is a conglomeration of meaningless facts except as it is organized by the interests of living beings. The artist does what no camera, no mere imitation, no mere document, can do, namely, selects aspects for emphasis and gives significant order; that is, his work is a creation. But it is appeal to feeling that confers significance and establishes a principle by which the essential can be distinguished from the trivial or irrelevant. Things are important not in themselves but by virtue of their relation to feeling or interest, and since men differ in their interests, no single set of things or qualities in the real world is important in general or without qualification. A conflagration interests various people differently: to the chemist it means, chiefly, a process of oxidation; to an owner, it may mean loss of money; to an artist, it means line, color, mass, in a series of relationships which he enjoys.

So to draw out and make clear the true character of anything is the task of the artist. Feeling is involved, since *what* is brought out depends upon the individual and his interests; and the satisfaction which instinct finds in comprehension, in imaginative realization, is one which is intrinsic to the process of bringing out, not something added afterwards: the person who comprehends and appreciates the work of art shares the emotions which prompted the artist to create. The artist gives us satisfaction by seeing for

## THE ROOTS OF ART

us more clearly than we could see for ourselves, and showing us what an experience more sensitive and profound than our own has shown him.

We all take some pleasure in seeing how things look, in observing their color, their contour, their movement, whether they are moving in our direction or not. In so far as we are successful in finding what is characteristic, appealing, or significant in the world about us, we are, in a small impromptu way, ourselves artists.<sup>1</sup> But the man who is an artist because the interest in understanding and depicting things is a master passion with him, sees more deeply and more penetratingly than we do, and, seeing better, can also show better. His interests compel him to grasp certain significant aspects of persons and things of the real world which our blindness and preoccupation with personal and practical concerns ordinarily hide from us.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*, p. 23.



### CHAPTER III

## THE PARTICULAR ARTS

No art<sup>1</sup> can reproduce fully the living concreteness of the real world, and so no art can provide the total experience with which active personal life presents us. The persons and things which we encounter affect us through various avenues of sense, and no one avenue can reveal to us all that they are. An orange, for instance, has a certain color, a distinctive taste and odor, and a shape which we can both see and feel. Of these qualities, only those which are visible can be produced by the painter. By the nature of his medium, his world is a soundless, tasteless, odorless and intangible one. In brief, all things have a variety of aspects of which only a fraction are directly accessible through the medium of each art. If any of the others are indicated, they are indicated indirectly, as when a painter picks out visible traits that signify a particular character, temperament, or frame of mind. How far such representation is possible is a doubtful question, but it is clear that by far the greater number of the effects which, for example, literature can achieve, are beyond the compass of painting or music, and that the attempt to secure them is disastrous to proper pictorial or musical quality.

Hitherto we have spoken of art in so far as it gives us insight or imaginative truth. But a work of art is not only a vehicle of imaginative insight; it is also a material object and as such it must be itself pleasing. That is, its individual appeal is a part of the total aesthetic effect. Language, for example, may be clear and forcible, but ugly in its sound, full of harsh dissonances and unpleasant rhythms. These things may not interfere with the sense of what is said, but they do detract from our pleasure in it. The same principle holds in music. Merely to have a command of the resources of orchestration will not save a composer from futility if his themes are commonplace or no more than sentimental or sensational; yet if the themes are impressive or moving, the sensuous quality of effective orchestration is an added element of appeal. What we may call "decorative quality" is thus a

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Buermeier, *The Aesthetic Experience*, pp. 82 ff.

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value in art, and any account of art which overlooks it omits an important element in the total aesthetic effect. Decorative quality in the visual arts may be illustrated by the pleasingness of vivid colors, or of simple designs and patterns. The decorations on china or in any ordinary fabric, the pattern in a wall paper or rug, have not a very exalted aesthetic value, but they have some value. This value is also to be found in the greatest works of art, in which it is combined with the other and more substantial qualities. The brilliant color of flowers, of sunsets, the diffused glow in a misty or dust-laden air when it reflects and refracts the sunlight, are further examples of the type of beauty in question.

The appeal of such decorative beauty is probably to be explained by its satisfaction of our general need of perceiving freely and agreeably. All our senses crave adequate stimulation, irrespective of what stimulates them, just as there are times when we want to move our limbs or to talk, no matter whether our limbs take us anywhere in particular, or whether we have anything important to say. This need of employing our faculties in a manner congenial to us, decoration meets and satisfies.

Let us consider how some of the recognized desiderata of art are related to this decorative quality of it. Every work of art, it is said, should have unity. Unity is the interrelation of parts, to the end that they shall all contribute to a single effect. Negatively, it is the elimination of whatever is superfluous or jarring, of all that could distract the attention or call up irrelevant associations. Unity, however, relates both to the expressive rôle of a work of art and to its decorative aspect. In a novel, for example, the novelist must present us with a coherent conception both of his individual characters, and of the situation and plot through which their characteristics are elicited. If any personage fails to play a consistent part, if some of his actions are not in keeping with his character as revealed otherwise, we say that the novelist has not thought him out consistently. If the plot has to be kept going by the introduction of new factors not inherent in the situation, if complications are introduced which do not spring from the original circumstances in their natural development, there is a loss of unity. In these instances, the lack of unity springs from the novelist's failure to grasp and digest the subject which he is presenting.

On the other hand, where there is no lack of unity in the representative aspect of a work, there may be an awkwardness of



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presentation, failure to show what has to be shown in the most easily apprehensible fashion. In such cases, the work loses its full possibilities of satisfying all of our demands because it lacks decorative quality. The purpose of unity is to facilitate simultaneous grasp of many details. What clearly, as we say, "hangs together," can be taken in readily and agreeably. Our general preference for making no greater effort than the situation requires, is thus met, and the pleasurable nature of the experience is by so much increased. A painter may have a searching and vigorous grasp of what he wishes to show, and his pictures may still suffer from the fact that he tries to show too much for his design, for the scheme according to which he arranges his subject-matter. We feel that the canvas is overloaded and, therefore, fails in unity. It lacks that single grasp of the significant features of what is shown: the line, color, movement and balance of forces do not unite to produce a single effect. But the simple fact of unity in pattern is something over and above this unity in all the factors in the picture; it has a value of its own when the more profound unity is lacking; and in the best painting the two will be found combined.

In any work of art we require that there be sufficient elements to stimulate our senses and hold our attention; otherwise there would be monotony, or a flagging of our interest. Just as we have seen that unity depends upon the need for ease in apprehension, so variety depends upon enjoyment of much stimulation of the senses. One form of variety is multiplicity of objective factors; that is, the presence in the object depicted, of mass or solidity, movement as well as effective grouping, large number of figures in the composition, etc. But there is also a merely decorative variety, which is secondary to the primary purpose of the painting. Ornament in the background, pleasing line which does not directly enter into the main structure of the composition, and so on, add to the total effect of the picture, although they might be eliminated without serious damage to expression. In general, we find it satisfactory to perceive as much as is consistent with unity in the perception.

The general contrast between essential or substantial unity and variety, with the attendant impression of power, and decorative unity and variety, may be illustrated if we compare Cézanne with Fragonard. Cézanne's pictures reveal a vigor of insight, a concentration upon the essential, which is largely absent even

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from the best of Fragonard's; Cézanne's are more austere, but at the same time less graceful, less obviously charming. The same contrast appears if we compare Daumier with Puvis. In Renoir, for example, both elements, the essential and the charming, are combined, with corresponding enhancement of the total aesthetic effect. Penetration or power, and decorative charm, are thus the two essential qualities in any work of art.

We may now consider the question of what the spectator himself must bring to a work of art if the fullest appreciation is to take place. The aesthetic experience, like all other experiences, is possible only by virtue of a certain background and training. Appreciation depends partly upon natural aptitude and partly upon previous experience. We perceive, in general, only what we can recognize, that is, only what previous perceptions have made at least in part familiar to us. When anything perceived is said to be novel, it is never wholly novel. It may be a new combination of old elements, a familiar theme with fresh variations; but its novelty is a detail in a context, a particular situation, which is not novel, and by this context we interpret it. The residue of past experience by which present experience is interpreted is called in psychology the "apperceptive mass," and its function in the appreciation of art is so important that it requires illumination in some detail.

We have all had the experience of being in an unfamiliar situation, and finding ourselves unable to see more than a fraction of what is going on in it. The machinery in the hold of a steamship, the babel of voices when many people are speaking in a foreign language, the actions of those with whose manners, customs, and traditions we are unfamiliar—all these things are likely to appear to us as so much confusion and blur. Our difficulty is both that we do not see and that we do not comprehend. We see and hear something, and we can at least recognize wheels and shafts in the machinery, vowel sounds and consonant sounds in the words spoken, gestures and goings to and fro in the actions of the strange people. But we perceive vaguely, and much of what is happening escapes us altogether. It is only after, and by means of, understanding, that we can perceive with any precision, or notice more than a small part of the details in the scene before us. What we do see is hazy, scanty, and without perspective. We overlook the important and significant, and the odds and ends that come to our attention are jumbled together without rhyme or reason.



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Our senses, meanwhile, may be as acute as those of another who misses nothing in the picture; but we have not learned to use them, and he has.

The expression "to use our senses" is an indication that seeing or hearing is an active process, not a mere registration of impressions. After we have learned the purpose and the general plan of the machinery, we know how to look for the parts and the connections of which we were at first oblivious. When we have learned the vocabulary of a foreign language and know what to listen for, the finer shades of sound begin to stand out. We have acquired by experience a background which enables us to comprehend the machinery or the foreign language.

The manner in which we acquire this background, this funded experience, which enables us to comprehend, is through the medium of the senses. In all experience the process is essentially the same. An object at first vague becomes more clearly defined; it takes form in our mind; and at the same time the things in it which at first we overlooked come to our attention and seem to be so unmistakably *there*, in relationships which enable us to comprehend the situation, that we cannot understand how they could ever have escaped us. This is true whether the object be a fountain pen, a suit of clothes, a sentence in the French language, the motor of an automobile, a symphony, or a painting.

But there are important differences in the way in which the process takes place in different minds. The foreign language may develop from vagueness into clarity easily and rapidly; the painting may offer more resistance; the symphony, after a dozen hearings, may be as incomprehensible as it was at the start. Here native ability and interest are the determining factors, but ability varies more widely than in the matter of learning to understand a fountain pen, or to put on a suit of clothes. The more complicated instances make clearer the truth that minds are responsive to varying objects in varying degree, and prove that experience is never gained by mere repeated exposure to an object or situation. Experience depends on more than mere length of acquaintance, and on more than mere intention. If we have no musical endowment, the most resolute and painstaking intention to appreciate Bach will avail us little. It is in general well known that equal opportunities and equal expenditures of effort rarely, if ever, yield the same results, and the difference means that people differ in their capacity to have experience of any given kind. Specific

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ability and genuine interest, as well as long acquaintance with anything, are therefore necessary to a finely responsive and intelligent experience.

The conception of a funded experience, of an apperceptive mass, has a direct application to art. Such experience is essential if we are to find what the artist has put in his work. Without it we cannot judge of his intentions or estimate the adequacy of their execution. We are in the position of one trying to decipher a cryptogram without knowing the code. The vision of a painter or of a poet is a sealed book to him who has no recollections of his own which the color, line, space, or the words, may assemble and vivify. A proper background of funded experience is thus necessary to open our eyes and set the strings of our feeling in sympathetic vibration with the artist's. Without it, we are in the proverbial difficulty of having eyes and seeing not, ears and hearing not.

We shall now try to show how insight into reality, the beauty of decoration, and the most fully developed responsiveness on the spectator's part enter into painting and its enjoyment.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AESTHETIC VALUES OF PAINTING

#### I. ART AND SUBJECT-MATTER

WE have seen that the values to be found in any work of art are those embodied in an imaginative grasp of subject-matter and its presentation in a form which has variety, decorative charm, and unity. Our general problem is now to consider these qualities in painting and to point out the way in which they may be found and judged.

We know that from among the many visual qualities of things the artist selects and emphasizes those which will provide us with a richer and better grasp of the world than we could achieve unaided. The word "better" requires explanation, and the explanation involves a statement of the way in which we ordinarily perceive things. It is sometimes supposed that our perceptions are photographic and that the artist's work is that of embellishing these photographic perceptions, giving us a more agreeable substitute for what would be, in its unadorned literalness, unaesthetic. The assumption underlying this view is false, for we see things, not as they are, but as convention has always conceived them. This is true of all things whether the seeing is literally "seeing," or such only figuratively, as when we speak of seeing a man's point of view. We see only in the light of our background, of the funded experience, noted in the previous chapter. Science has made it abundantly clear that to perceive requires a long training and an indefinite amount of labor. The ideas we have are those of the society in which we grow up and they are confirmed by the habits which that society imposes upon us. Our natural tendency is to see only so much as will fit easily into these ideas, and to overlook most of what is distinctive or individual in any object or situation. What we suppose ourselves to see is thus largely the projection of our own minds, in which the real object is both impoverished by omissions and overlaid by accretions. These omissions and accretions testify to the partiality of our interests, to our shortsightedness. They show that when we begin to take



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account of our world we are far from an impartial and clear-sighted view of it.

This fact of the psychology of perception is corroborated by the history of art. Primitive art individualizes its objects very inadequately. In place of particulars, it gives us types. Not only are its figures very much alike, but in their grouping, in their relation to their background, and in the background itself there is very close adherence to a formula. It is unreasonable to suppose that the painters who worked according to these formulas deliberately chose to do so, after rejecting all alternative possibilities. They painted things as they saw them, but they saw them in a stereotyped, conventional form. Hence, we have the Florentine type, the Venetian type, the Impressionist type, each distinctive of a particular period in the history of art.

The artist's task is to shun the conventional idealizations which represent things as they are habitually conceived, and to see things as they are in reality. Great art has always been realistic, but since truth, when unfamiliar, outrages the sensibilities of those who cling to ancient habits, great art is nearly always greeted with the charge of ugliness, of falsity, of anarchic misrepresentation. The charge merely means that the artist compels the spectator of his work to see the world anew, and that the spectator projects the unpleasantness of the operation into the work of art. Anarchy, falsity, charlatanism and ugliness are the stock terms of abuse applied to every great artist by his own generation, but what these terms really mean is their exact opposite—that the artist has a grasp of things more profoundly ordered and so more beautiful than that current in his day.<sup>1</sup>

“Realism,” however, suggests only one side of the truth, and if insisted upon to the exclusion of everything else, leads to a pitfall no less fatal to art than the smooth beauty of the conventionalist. If it is true that conventions hide the truth from us, it is also true that only through conventions, existing as masses of funded experience, can we hope ever to find the truth. The painter who attempts to throw tradition overboard entirely may escape illusion, but he escapes it at the cost of comparative blindness. He merely exchanges the traditions of art for those of ordinary life, which latter are so deeply ingrained that they cannot be discarded. His work then becomes mere literalism. For the conventions of the academy he substitutes those of the camera and forgets that Na-

<sup>1</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*, passim, but especially p. 18.



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ture, uninterpreted by human desires and human experiences has no aesthetic quality at all. Its representation reveals no significance, has no moving force; the artist sinks into the craftsman. Art steers a middle course between conventional "idealism" and photographic literalism, and there is no abstract formula, no mechanical device, by which the course may be plotted. Ultimately, the appeal is to feeling, the cultivated feeling of the person who is naturally sensitive to the specific values of plastic art, and whose sensitiveness has been developed and disciplined by long experience.

It is obvious that he who would appreciate and judge of art must provide himself with a first-hand acquaintance with what the artist seeks to show him, that is, the visible aspect of real things. His training in art must include a study of nature as it reveals itself to the eye. If he is interested in seeing how things really look, in the effect made by their coloring, their arrangement, their changing appearance in light and shadow, his enjoyment of nature is the selective one of the artist. The artist is interested in seeing the essential visible reality of things and in showing them in new forms that move us emotionally. Unless the interest in seeing is shared by the observer of a work of art, he cannot share the artist's experience. If he does share the interest, it will find expression in appreciation of the aesthetic phases of everyday life as well as in the museum.

The case is analogous to that of literature. Literature is also an interpretation of life; it sets forth what the writer has found of comedy, pathos, or drama in the personal experience of human beings. The reader who has himself no personal experience, who cannot bring the content of literature to the touchstone of his own life, cannot tell whether or not the writer's art is sensitive, intelligent, or wide in its imaginative scope. Such a reader remains essentially a man of words and books, preoccupied with tricks of style and literary devices, a grammarian and an academician. He cannot in any real sense grasp what the writer means to say and certainly cannot add to it any feelings of his own that come from similar experiences.

### II. THE NATURE OF FORM

In everyday speech we constantly encounter the word "form" and in reading about art we see the word used with what is evidently a significance peculiar to art. In its general sense, we

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know that it is form which gives a thing its distinctive individuality; but writers on art have used the word "form" with so many meanings that the utmost confusion and ambiguity exist. This condition of affairs necessitates a definition of the word in its general meaning if we are to use it with accuracy and precision when we mean form as related to art. In point of fact, form has no significance in art that it does not have in language accurately employed in connection with things in general. First, let us consider the general meaning of the word. All objects in the world have certain attributes which we term qualities when we are referring to things, and sensations when we refer to our own experiences. For example, a table is brown, smooth, hard and cold; it is also oblong, three feet high and its color varies according as it is in light or in shadow. But the sum total of these qualities is not what we mean when we say the word "table," for another object could have all these qualities and be not a table or anything that looks like one. We perceive it as a table only when we see those qualities *in certain relations* to each other, the relation of each one of its parts to the other parts and the relation of it as a whole to other objects. That is, to grasp it as an individual thing is to see those relations; to see the form which gives the essence of the thing, makes it what it is. Every object of which we are conscious has such a form, and until we have grasped its form we cannot be said to perceive the object. In a table, the form consists of a network of spatial relations in which color, hardness, illumination, etc., are arranged in a certain definite order. Both for ordinary consciousness and for art, impressions without form, if they exist, are meaningless.

In the form of a human being, we find a more complex series of relationships: there is a certain expanse of brow, broadness or narrowness of face, ratio between breadth of shoulders and height. It is the perception of these relationships that gives us the form of a man when stationary. For the form of a man in movement, the relation is between his position at one moment and his position at another moment: the way in which arms and legs are bent and straightened, in which the body sways with each step, etc. The form of a man speaking or singing is made of a series of relationships established by the use of his voice: a rich voice has many overtones, it is a fuller chord than a thin voice; monotony of voice is absence of inflection, of change in pitch or volume. Each of these, a rich, thin, or monotonous voice, is a form made



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up of a different series of relationships. Finally, if we consider the man as a whole, as an ensemble of physical, intellectual and moral qualities, only those things are recognized as characteristic of him which are seen in relation to the rest of what he is and does, and to the situation in which he exists and acts.

The word form in connection with art is frequently used with a subjective meaning implied, but here too it is a series of relationships. All experience leaves in the memory a residue, a comparatively permanent possession, and that is employed to interpret new situations analogous to the original. Such a residue consists of the series of relationships which gave the experience its distinctive and individual characteristics, that is, its form. Even though the form be so hazy and inadequate as to misrepresent its original, what trace is left, exists as a form. It is the accumulation of these forms that constitutes our background, our mass of funded experience, which psychologists term the apperceptive mass. That mass is never a mere jumble of sensations, or images, but is always a grouping of them. These funded forms enable us to recognize an object, and the process of learning by experience is nothing more than a gradual organization of many sets of impressions into literally innumerable distinctive forms.

Much of the confusion and ambiguity in the use of the word form has resulted from ignoring the obvious fact that no object or situation has one form and only one form. A man may be French, a Jew, an engineer, a thief, a celibate; New York is a city, a financial center, a harbor; in each case the man's or the city's form varies according to the grouping of relations which determine each category, and no single form represents either the man or the city in concrete fullness. Which of the various aspects we select to designate the man or the city depends upon the most representative or characteristic experience we have had with them. Obviously, the most adequate representation would be one composed of the greatest number of forms which go to make up the man or the city. In general, the depth and power of a mind or personality is measured by the variety and subtlety of the forms accessible to it and by its power to illuminate the whole of the object, which is a complex of many forms.

Whenever we use the word form we mean that matter is organized into a distinctive entity; but the matter organized may be itself form in relation to other matter. For example: the United

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States is an organization of separate states, and within that organization the United States is the form and the states the matter. If we abstract any one state and consider it in relation to its component counties, the state becomes the form and the counties the matter organized into the form of a state. An exactly analogous situation is found in painting. Subsidiary to the plastic form, which is the unification of all the matter of the canvas, there exist a number of minor forms made up of color, line, space, and these latter enter into relations with each other and make more complex forms. The plastic form comprises all the forms made up of the various elements, including the pattern which organizes the decoration.

Form, in its widest sense, is the plan of organization by which the details that constitute the matter of an object are brought into relation, so that they unite to produce a single aesthetic effect. This is true of a painting, a symphony, a piece of sculpture, a poem, drama, novel, or essay. In the case of each, form dominates all the subtypes of the matter which enter into the work of art. In the form which we term symphony, its contained matter—chords, melodies, movements—are brought into the particular relations which make that form a symphony. In painting, the matter—line, color, space—is unified into the form we term plastic unity. The more fully the work of integration is carried out, that is, the greater the formal unification of all the constituent matter, the better the painting, the symphony, or the statue.

We see, therefore, that forms may have infinite variety, that the greatest scope exists for the artist to integrate his matter into forms in which the only limits are the possibilities of his medium, his own imagination, and his own technical skill. Failure to recognize this protean character of form is responsible for the vast amount of absurd writing on art which would limit plastic form to that particular expression which the critic happens to prefer. Such an attitude is invariably the mark of incapacity and academicism. The use of a particular plan of organization, or form, depends upon purely personal characteristics, like temperament, vision, sensitivity, and a painter is an artist in so far as he is endowed with those qualities and is able to reveal them in his work. Consequently, he alone can determine the form his painting must take. In condemning an artist whose form is personal, distinctive and original, the critic is not dealing with



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art itself, but is asserting that art must conform to standards which are basically mechanized or stereotyped and, therefore, academic. This means that the standard set is the imitation of familiar forms either in nature or the art of the past, without the living spirit that converts them into the reality we always find in true art. Such imitation defines academicism, and conjoined with mere technical skill it sets the standard of whatever type of painting happens to be popular. Academicians like John Singer Sargent and Robert Henri use Manet's technique but fail to capture its spirit of life. Childe Hassam, Redfield, Garber and a host of others play the same rôle in relation to Claude Monet. Whistler represents a dead academic synthesis of Velasquez, the Japanese and Courbet. Derain's form has been successively an imitation of the surface qualities of Cézanne, Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, Bronzino, Courbet, Corot and Renoir.

### III. FORM AND TECHNIQUE

The foregoing discussion shows that form constitutes the essence of an object, that which gives the object its distinctive individuality, makes it what it is. In painting, the forms which a painter creates reveal unerringly the organization of his mind and character. Just as the forms of things themselves are protean, many-sided, varying under different circumstances and at different periods of time, so also are varied the forms which an artist may create. The painter's individuality finds expression in what he sees to be distinctive and characteristic in the real world, and, since it is form that confers individuality, this amounts to the perception of a specific form. But the rendering of different forms requires different technical means, different styles; it is thus that "the style is the man." The point may be made clear by a few illustrations, beginning with Claude Lorrain, the father of landscape painting. If we consider landscape painting as a purely objective affair, as an attempt to render with literal fidelity the appearance of meadow, stream, forest and mountain, we shall note points in which Claude fell short of his successors, and consider him merely as a stepping-stone to later men, to Constable, Corot, Monet or Cézanne. He will seem to be inferior to Monet in ability to show how color is affected by light and shadow, to Courbet in grasp of the naturalistic reality of individual objects, in the force and vigor he can lend to the rocks, trees and human figures in his landscapes.



Chinese—Fourteenth Century

Barnes Foundation





**Masaccio**

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**Florence**



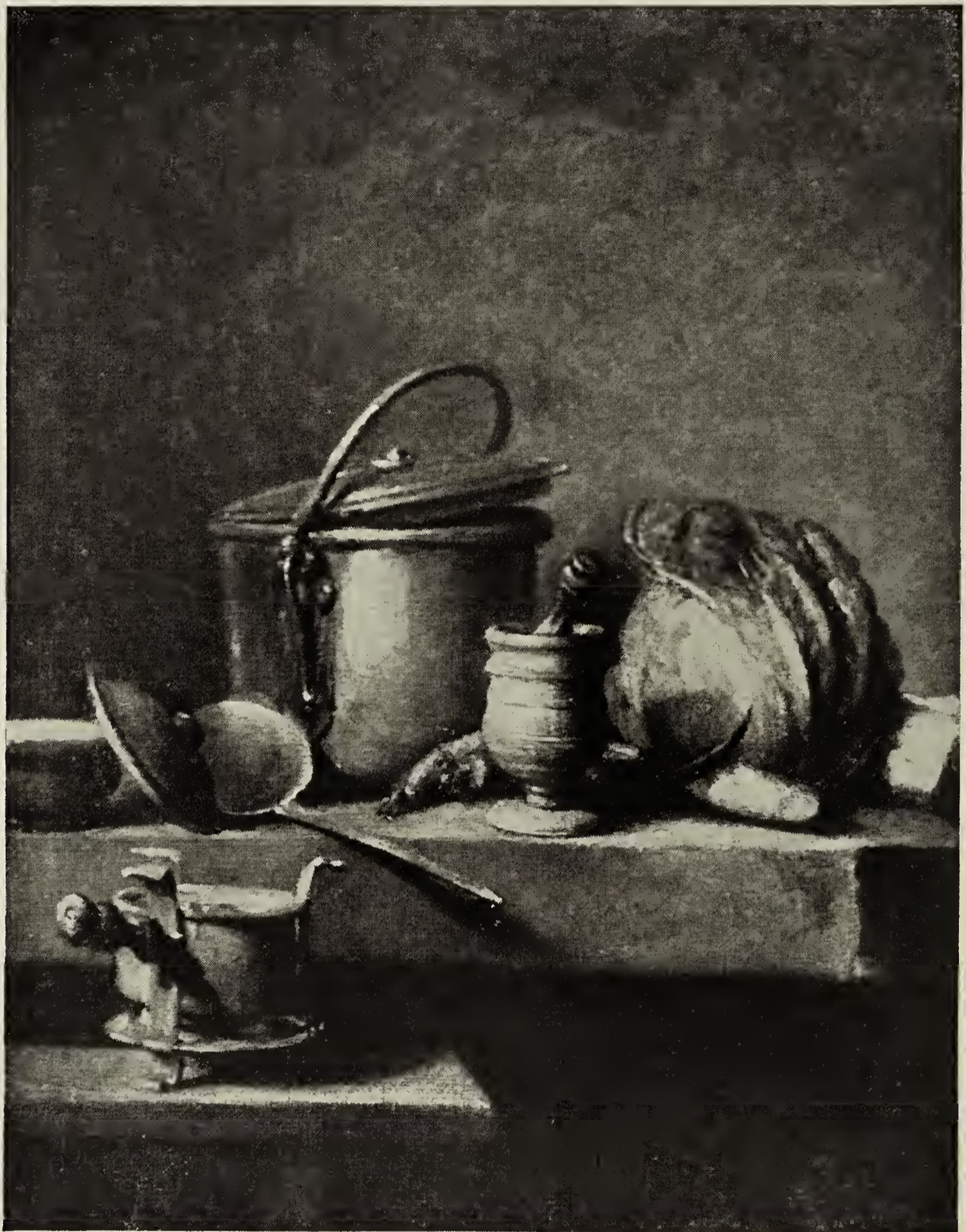


Rembrandt

Analysis, page 445

Wallace Collection





Chardin

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Cézanne surpassed him in his eye for the essential and living in nature, in ability to discard the irrelevant and lend solidity and substance to masses in three dimensions.

To hold these relative disadvantages against Claude is to mistake the meaning of aesthetic intention and form. The artist must be judged by what he tries to do; the fact that forms of one sort are absent from his work does not detract from its value if it contains the forms which reveal what he was interested to show. Claude was interested in nature, not for any independent life it might contain in its parts, but as an embodiment, on a large scale, of human feelings. It was the landscape as a whole which served for him as the object of emotion; he was desirous of rendering "the spirit of the place," and the total form, that is, his design, was of paramount importance. It is precisely that design, that presentation of subtle relationships between the elements in his composition, that gives the romance, the glamour, the mystery, the grandeur, the melancholy, the majesty, which are expressible through the larger groupings of natural objects. For that general effect, too much individuality in the parts of the composition would be destructive. The comparative lifelessness of detail in trees, rocks, etc., the absence of what is arresting or moving in separate figures, really contributes to the impression at which he aims. The fact that he often had his figures painted in by others is therefore not a reflection upon his art, but an indication that he could recognize what was really indispensable to his purpose and leave what was incidental to assistants.

Claude's form was thus the design by which large effects are rendered, and for this his style was admirably adapted. Manet aimed at an effect quite opposite to that of Claude. He was not trying to portray the epic quality which may attach to a wide expanse of landscape, but the distinctive, natural quality of individual things. For Claude, the particular detail was submerged in the picture as a whole, and had no importance in itself. Although he did not simplify, but painted all details with considerable fullness, the attention they received was perfunctory. Manet's objects and figures are much more simplified; but the few details selected for emphasis succeed in individualizing the object much more than do Claude's more literal and diffuse representations. The effort to give what is unique in the things of ordinary life, to show their essential quality, ap-



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pears in Manet's brushwork and in his rejection of the third dimension and of chiaroscuro. An arrangement of objects in deep space, the varying effects upon a set of objects of light coming from a single source, all point to things as organized into extensive compositions. Manet was not interested in things as a part of a world, but in things as they are in themselves, with only enough relation to other things to show their characteristic function; hence his design was flat, while Claude's was set in deep space.

An analogy with literature may enforce the contrast, and show the parallel between style and subject-matter. Claude lived in the century of Milton; Manet in that of Maupassant. The Seventeenth Century still aimed at monumental effects, such as those of the Renaissance; it was the century of *Paradise Lost*. The Nineteenth Century, especially the latter half of it, had a much more restricted vision, but saw much more clearly and penetratingly what came within its range. Manet's form was a distinct thing in itself, representative of himself and of the spirit of his age. To censure him because he lacks the scope and poetry of Claude would be as unjust as to censure Maupassant because he lacks the amplitude and magnificence, the elevation of sentiment and the sweep of rhythm, which represent Milton's form and the spirit of his time.

With Cézanne we have an aesthetic purpose different from either that of Claude or that of Manet, and a correspondingly distinctive technique. Cézanne shared Manet's interest in real things, but he sought to represent more clearly the dynamic relations between things. Neither painter attempted merely to be literal; both tried to render the essential; but for Manet's general form, flat painting was more expressive, while for Cézanne's the essential was defined in terms of solidity and spatial relationship in three dimensions. This concern, combined with the impressionistic interest in color, necessitated the use of a new form. He saw in things an organization which could be rendered by the use of color in connection with a series of distorted planes. To express this organization, he created his own technique or style, and the results prove the efficacy of the means.

Academic criticism necessarily fails to estimate justly the work of any artist, because its fixed standards are incongruous in a world which is in a state of flux. Every technical device is, however, correlated with a definite aesthetic purpose; it is a means, not just

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of showing things, but of showing something in particular. Unless we have seen what the artist intends to show we cannot tell whether the means are appropriate or inappropriate. When an artist takes over the technique of one of his predecessors without sharing the vision which animated it, he takes over a mortal body but loses its immortal soul. He becomes an academic or eclectic painter, and his work suffers a loss of all vitality or individuality. This is not true of a painter who genuinely works in a tradition, because he has seen for himself what the tradition has to show him, and uses its technical means not mechanically but intelligently. Like everyone who has really grasped a principle or method, he is able to make fresh applications of it; it is a means of seeing by which his eye is opened to something not previously seen or put down. In that fresh applications are made, the originality of the painter is vindicated: Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and Tintoretto all worked in the Venetian tradition and each created new forms of his own which greatly enriched that tradition.

Cézanne suffers no loss of individuality because his work shows him to have learned from Michel Angelo, El Greco and Pissarro. From Michel Angelo he learned the value of muscular accentuations in achieving solidity; from El Greco, he learned the value of distortions in enriching design; from Pissarro, he learned the value of color used in connection with light to make color more structural and more moving. But all of these technical means he so modified and so welded into a form which is truly his own, that a new and distinct creation emerged.

Derain, in contrast, cannot with accuracy be said to have learned from Cézanne and the host of other painters whose methods are clearly seen in his work. He has appropriated their methods, but he has not seen for himself what his mentors saw, and his borrowings from them accordingly become not methods but tricks of technique. Derain is an eclectic; like the Bolognese painters of the end of the Renaissance, he has appropriated the devices of other men without creating anything new.

### IV. PLASTIC AND OTHER VALUES

We have said that what an artist places before us is a series of forms, which, in objects and situations, appear to him as significant, and which were productive of the emotion which he seeks to embody. Since, as we have noted, every real object or situation contains a multitude of forms, it offers the artist an almost indefinite



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wealth of resources for aesthetic effect. Not all of these resources, however, are available to the artist as a worker in a particular medium. Music, literature, and plastic art, each makes its own selection from the mass of forms which are presented by the real world; and the problem of the extent to which these selections overlap, the extent to which a picture or a symphony may properly be also dramatic or narrative, is one of the most difficult in aesthetics. The tendency to look for illustration or narrative prevents the recognition of the properly expressive quality of the work of art and seeks to enjoy the subject-matter as something independently real. It is undoubtedly true that the artist puts before us a representation which, merely as a representation of a thing in the real world, has associations of its own, and these may be independently agreeable. But it is difficult to avoid saying that these associations are irrelevant unless they are represented in the picture itself. In brief, if we say that subject-matter is of no importance, we seem to be committed to an advocacy of purely abstract art, to which representation is wholly irrelevant; and if we say that subject-matter is not irrelevant, then it is not apparent how we shall discriminate between art and mere illustration.

We have an analogous problem in music. "Absolute" music is usually considered as a higher type of music than that to which words are to be sung. Words represent ideas, and definite ideas are only casually or adventitiously associated with the emotions which music arouses. Hence, opera, song, and indeed program music too, are condemned in contrast to sonata or symphony. On the other hand, when we compare, let us say, a symphony by Mozart with Beethoven's "Eroica" and "Fifth," it is impossible not to be conscious of a difference of a semi-literary quality. Beethoven's own title for his "Third Symphony" is "In Memory of a Great Man," and the symphony is heroic in essence, as Mozart's are not. Our appreciation is of the intrinsic quality of the music itself, which has the objective quality indicated by the title, and our enjoyment seems to be for that reason not the less but the more aesthetic.

In contrast, let us consider Tschaiikowsky's overture entitled "1812." With it there is a definite program which narrates Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his ultimate defeat there. After a solemn passage, suggesting the sacrificial frame of mind in which a nation springs to arms for the defense of its soil, we hear the "Marseillaise," which struggles in the orchestra with the Russian



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national anthem, amidst the noise of battle. The Russian hymn is at first given out in snatches, abruptly broken off; but it gradually becomes firmer, and is at last triumphantly played through, while the "Marseillaise" wavers and disappears, and chimes and trumpets unite in a pæan of victory. The pleasure afforded is largely amusement at a *tour de force*, and it is difficult not to feel that we are in the presence of what is essentially musical vaudeville. The device of representing a war by contention between the national anthems of the nations concerned, and of making music mimic a battle, seems unimaginative and childish. The total effect is sensational and offensive rather than aesthetic. We feel that the association between the "Marseillaise" and France is, from the point of view of music, entirely adventitious, and similarly with the Russian hymn. The composer has attempted to stir the emotions appropriate to music by use of the symbols of nationalism. It is almost as though a painter, to suggest danger, were to show us a railway signal-board standing at the angle which directs an engineer to stop his train. The idea would not be really embodied in the painting itself, any more than a man's character is contained or implied in the name "Smith" or "Jones," or the story of Waterloo set forth in Napoleon's green coat and cocked hat.

In this fact we find a clue to the general principle of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate use of subject-matter. In so far as the spectator or listener or reader must depend upon the resources of his own knowledge to read the qualities of the subject-matter into the artistic representation, the effect is illegitimate. An artist, however, is entitled to such effects as he can really incorporate into his rendering of a subject. In the second movement of the "Eroica" symphony, Beethoven actually makes us feel the spirit of tragedy in the music itself, and we need know nothing about the story to enjoy the music.

The same principle appears in the field of plastic art. We have subject-matter employed at the lowest level when there is no real plastic equivalent for the narrative or sentimental theme. In an ordinary magazine illustration, the familiar devices are shuffled and recombined, the old tricks are rehearsed again, but there is the same absence of any individual perception, of any distinction in execution, that we find in the words and music of popular sentimental ballads. The subject-matter of such illustrations is itself usually trite and trivial so that even from a literary point of view it is hopelessly crude and banal. Even great artists

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are human beings and sometimes they resort to the illegitimate use of subject-matter. Delacroix is entitled to great distinction as an artist if only for his contributions to the brilliant and powerful use of color. But he was also highly romantic and liked to portray fervid emotions, in which he expresses a personal note which is quite original, at least in the sense of being unusually striking. What he felt as heroism and romance, and depicted by exotic subject-matter and exaggerated gestures, seems to us now not sublime but overdramatic, if not bombastic. This fondness for Byronic stage-properties points to a defect in his observation of the things existing before his eyes. If his sense for the dramatic had sharpened his observation and enabled him to see in the real world the qualities he admired, both his grasp of form and the drama which he seeks to portray would have been better. Tintoretto also painted subjects of a highly dramatic nature but he gave us the plastic equivalent of the human values intrinsic to the situation, so that while in Delacroix we see flamboyance and melodrama, in Tintoretto we find the peace that aesthetic satisfaction always yields.

In Goya, Daumier, Glackens and Pascin, we find illustration brought to such a high level that it becomes great art. All of them inform us about the situations they portray, but the means employed are truly plastic, used with individual expressiveness and extraordinary grasp of the significant. The pleasure we get from their work is of plastic origin in that the story they tell, while interesting in itself, is entirely subsidiary to the form in which the illustration is embodied. Color, line, space are arranged in forms which move us independently of the comical, ironical or satiric in the situations depicted. Their forms are significant because of the imaginative vision, originality and power of their creators.

Velasquez and Renoir have the power of giving plastic form to values of subject-matter at a still higher level. Each had a distinctly personal vision as well as command over the resources of painting, color, drawing, composition, design, which permitted them to render the essence of the subjects which they treated. Renoir is the more poetic of the two. His painting catches the spirit of youth and springtime and vitality; he sees and draws forth the joyous and glamorous in the world. Velasquez is a realist, but his realism is penetrating to a degree that carries it far beyond mere literalism. He illuminates his subjects, not by adventitious ornament, but by a simplification and a self-effacing



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detachment which allows their inner nature to manifest itself through strictly plastic channels. Both men had an extraordinary eye for seeing which of the qualities of the real world lend themselves to plastic reproduction, and at the same time display the intrinsic nature of the objects into which they enter. In neither is the painting, as something over and above what is represented, merely an end in itself. The ornamental motive in evidence in Renoir is so fused with the structural elements that an enriched plastic form emerges. The picture sheds light upon what is represented, and this revelation of the world has a value which, though in the strict sense illustrative, is truly plastic or pictorial, and not at all "literary."

It is often considered that with the advent of Courbet and Manet the values of subject-matter disappeared from plastic art, since these painters, and the majority of their successors, painted anything whatever. In this they undoubtedly show a contrast with their predecessors from Giotto to Delacroix. There is a serious fallacy, however, in arguing from the fact that painting no longer confines itself to a particular sort of subject to the conclusion that it has lost interest in subject-matter altogether. We do not ordinarily care whether we have one particular coin or bank note, or another, so long as they have the power to satisfy some needs of our mind or body. When Manet and his successors said that the subject did not matter, they meant merely that the qualities in which they were interested could be found in any subject whatever. Manet believed that all things are interesting for what they are in themselves, not for some pose which they can assume. He was more truly interested in subject than, for example, David, since he could find something worth recording in anything, and not only in the "noble," that is, the stiff or affected. Manet was interested in life and David in death.

Another serious misconception is that the expression "subject-matter" must be limited to individual things. In a cubist picture, the thread of connection with individual topics or objects may be very slight, and the picture is certainly not moving because it incorporates the values of the individual thing represented. For example, it may show a violin disintegrated into many planes, all revealing partial views, seen from various angles, rendered with every degree of distortion, and recombined into a form which is plastic but not representative, and which may have a charm and an emotional force of its own. The degree of resemblance between



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picture and original may be so slight that, but for the title, identification would be impossible. Even when identification is made, aesthetic satisfaction may be increased little if at all.

This instance proves that forms may be charged with aesthetic feeling even when they represent nothing definite in the real world or when what they represent is clearly without appeal in itself. This may seem like a *reductio ad absurdum* of the view that aesthetic value has anything to do with the values of subject-matter. But a hypothesis offered by Mr. Laurence Buermeyer seems to us to explain the situation satisfactorily. His theory is as follows.

All emotions are at least in part generalized: they are called forth not merely by particular things or situations, but by virtue of universal qualities which these things contain. This is true of the ordinary emotions and also of the aesthetic emotions. When we cannot find in a picture representation of any particular object, what it represents may be the qualities which all particular objects share, such as color, extensity, solidity, movement, rhythm, etc. All particular things have these qualities; hence what serves, so to speak, as a paradigm of the visible essence of all things may hold in solution the emotions which individual things provoke in a more highly specialized form. It may give us a realizing sense of space, of externality, of colorfulness, of mobility, and along with these a distillation of the feelings which spacious, colorful, moving objects provide. Mr. Buermeyer adds plausibility by suggesting analogous cases of relatively vague apprehension or feeling. When we hear such words as "and," "but," "although," "therefore," we have usually little or nothing in the way of mental imagery, and yet there is no lack of meaning. We grasp something, even in the absence of any mental imagery: consciousness is not the less real because it is generalized. Again, music awakens very definite emotions, even in the absence of any perceptible objective reference. One air may make us sad, another joyous; neither may call up any definite reference whatever, and the cause of the difference may defy analysis; but the effect is incontestable. In other words, feelings travel far afield from the objects that excited them originally, and it is therefore a mistake to suppose that a feeling has no objective reference because its object has no clear resemblance to the object that served it as stimulus originally. In each instance, we draw upon a general fund of experience, that is, upon our apperceptive mass.

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If Mr. Buermeyer's hypothesis be true, then cubistic pictures of the kind mentioned only represent a stage beyond that of impressionism. The impressionists were interested in any or every object, because every object had its own characteristic form or quality which might be given pictorial representation. The cubists are interested not in the qualities which distinguish, let us say, an apple as an apple, or a woman as a woman, but in the qualities which are common to both as parts of the visible universe. Indeed, between the impressionists like Claude Monet and the cubists, there stands a painter, Cézanne, who seems to represent a transitional type. His figures do not seem obviously "natural" and "lifelike," as do Manet's; they are sometimes distorted out of any close resemblance to the objective things which they represent; and yet they seem to have even a more intense reality than Manet's. This reality is not that of literal representation and it does not depend merely upon such things as depth and apparent tangibility; it is more generalized but not therefore less objective. It would be beside the point to contend that this increased reality is due to plastic form; the matter of representation is clearly separable from that of plastic qualities.

What we have been contending for is the fact that reference to the real world does not disappear from art as forms cease to be those of actually existing things, any more than objectivity departs from science when it ceases to talk in terms of earth, air, fire and water, and substitutes for these the less easily recognizable "hydrogen," "oxygen," "nitrogen" and "carbon."

Critics differ so widely in their estimate of the aesthetic value of any particular form or set of forms that what to one seems merely literary or photographic, seems to another a profound and searching grasp of essentials. The principal reason for difference in judgments of all kinds lies in the fact that no two men have the same fund of experience, and consequently no two men are precisely on a par in their ability to follow the lead given by a painter. Above a certain level, appreciation is always in part the creative appreciation of one who is acutely sensitive to forms or who has a large mass of funded experience. In such cases the individual is rarely able to gauge the precise extent to which his enjoyment comes from his own resources and is not intrinsic to the work of art.

For instance, Gauguin's Tahitian pictures, which are his most distinctive achievements, may have an appeal by virtue of their



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subject-matter. Their exotic, even lurid, quality may seem either a genuinely aesthetic value, like Constable's power of catching the spirit of an English countryside, or merely meretricious, a device for stimulating a palate weary of the more sober scenes of an older civilization. Putting to one side the question of Gauguin's properly plastic virtues, we may say that the question is one of individual taste and interest. There are people who constantly desire experiences as different as possible from those with which they are familiar, who are chiefly concerned to add to the sum of their sensations. Such experiences are vicarious adventures, a living of a more exciting life than their own humdrum world provides. There is another class of people who prefer to discriminate between those experiences they already have had and thus to classify, order and penetrate deeply into a relatively small segment of life. Both interests are legitimate; extensive experience has a value as well as intensive; but primary devotion to either makes the other appear inferior. Constable will seem comparatively tame to the man of one temperament; Gauguin, crude to a man of the other. The reason is that the bent of mind which makes Constable's work seem fertile in suggestion leaves its possessor unresponsive to alien scenes and incapable of being stimulated by them to imaginative excursions of his own; and the same is true, with rôles reversed, of the man of opposite bent. In general, if we are shown something which awakens no echoes in ourselves it may seem merely literal or photographic or dry or superficial: the only clue that is meaningful to us is one which our interests will prompt us to follow up. By the same token, science may seem dry and trivial or mechanical to those who have no desire to understand the world intellectually; and poetry seem tedious, futile, or trifling to those who care nothing for imaginative understanding. Each is right in his own sphere, and wrong only in supposing that his sphere leaves room for no other.

In contrasting Gauguin with Constable, we have been referring to the attitude of the human being of average culture rather than to the highly equipped specialist primarily concerned with the aesthetic significance of plastic elements. The plastic form in Gauguin's work is obviously thin and feeble compared with the same in Constable. When Gauguin's work stimulates a spectator to the point of aesthetic fullness, we have clearly a case of temperamental preference for subject-matter usurping the function of an external stimulus of a purely plastic nature. That is



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a legitimate aesthetic experience, but it amounts to a kind of interpretative criticism which an individual's own personality reads into the painting. It means merely that a plastic form need not be in itself very strong to set in vibration the chords of sympathy which, once under way, increase in volume and power and carry the individual into a world of aesthetic experience which is to a large extent of his own making rather than that of the painter. In the case of Constable, the plastic form is powerful enough in itself to move a trained observer to greater aesthetic heights than the plastic form in Gauguin. He need have no preference for the subject-matter and still have the capacity of interpretative criticism that comes from native sensibility and a rich fund of experience. A disinterested person would be able to say, and on good psychological grounds, that there is a tinge of sentimentalism in the Gauguin enthusiast.

### V. FORM AND MATTER

We have hitherto spoken of art values only in relation to form, and have made only casual mention of the material or matter which is organized into forms. We have seen that the distinction between form and matter is only relative; that we cannot think of form and matter as two independent variables, making their separate contributions to the total aesthetic effect of the work of art. Matter apart from form is never to be found, since what is matter in relation to more generalized form, is form with relation to other matter: a state, which is matter in its relation to the United States, is form in its relation to the counties in that state. It is now necessary to show in detail how the two values are not really two, but one; that is, the apparently separate values of matter are really included in the values of form.

Let us consider the distinction between the two as it appears on a first glance. If we contrast a painting with a drawing, or with a photograph of the painting, the painting seems to differ from both the drawing and the photograph in that it adds to the skeleton of form, the enriching material of color. Since any good painting is better than a photograph of it can possibly be, the value of the painting seems to be that of the form, as given in the bare outline, plus that of the material. In a similar way, when a symphony is transcribed for the piano, the loss in effect

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seems to be due to the subtraction of the orchestral color lent by the varying timbre of the different instruments. Again, when a prose synopsis of the ideas in a poem falls short in emotional quality of the poem itself, we are likely to suppose that what makes the difference is the loss of such sensuous effects as rhythm and rhyme. A moment's reflection will show that all such suppositions are erroneous and that they arise from the improper limitation put upon "form" of which we have already spoken. In the case of the poem, the ideas when prosaically expressed cease to be really the same ideas because every word has a wealth of associations, derived from its use in many contexts, and all these associations enter into the content of the poetic idea when it is expressed by their aid. When it is stripped of associations and reduced to what can be given by abstract symbols, all its relations are disturbed and it ceases to be the same idea, the same "form." The form is the living body, and the symbol is the bare skeleton. To translate

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past

into "When I indulge in unuttered reminiscence" is not to give a new material setting to an already existing form; it is to lose a great part of the form itself.

The same is true in music. The piano transcription of a symphony loses the qualities of orchestral color and other relations which give the symphony its unique form, that is, make it what it is. A part of the form goes when the matter is changed. The sounds characteristic of the piano require a form of their own, one essentially different from that suitable to the orchestra. Otherwise, the best piano music would be that which most nearly reproduces the orchestral effect, and this is not the case. Chopin's works for the piano are better than Liszt's, and for the reason that Chopin's effects are properly pianistic, while Liszt's are conceived for the orchestra. It is the mark of an inferior symphonist that his works lose little if so transcribed, for it shows that his orchestral forms were defective to begin with. In really good music, even the shift from one key to another makes a difference. Once more, form and matter are not two separable things, but only distinguishable aspects, like the length and the direction of a line. The form that is merely added to matter



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is mechanical; the matter that is merely added to form is redundancy and ostentation.

We find the same principle to hold in painting. The color which is added to the lines of a drawing or the tones of a photograph does not simply add a sensuous value to a form already given. It enters into the form itself, and the better the painting the truer this is. There are, of course, paintings in which the form is really not painted but drafted, with color added as an ornament; such paintings, as for example those of David, lose comparatively little when photographed; but the fact constitutes a reflection upon the original quality of the work. To overlook the functional value of color and treat it as simple decoration is to misconceive the purpose of painting and to lose sight of its specific medium. It is to make painting an inferior substitute for sculpture, or else mere illustration.

The reason why it is possible to photograph a painting at all is that different colors have different light-values, so that in a photograph they appear as varying shades of gray. A dark blue will be represented by a dark gray, a yellow by a light gray. In a painting, however, there are light and shadow effects, degrees of illumination, which are directly represented, as in *chiaroscuro*. In a photograph, these also are represented by grays, and the two correspondences overlap and obscure one another: a light gray may represent either a yellow or red, or a brightly lighted blue or green. In other words, two entirely different sets of relationships, that is, forms, are fused, and the specific quality of the ordering of the elements is lost. This means that a part of the form simply disappears, for the color is a part of the form and not an extraneous addition to it.

The loss of form with loss of color is to be found in reproductions of work so little colorful as that of Daumier. Daumier worked with somber tones, qualified by light and shadow; but the effect of the light on the tones is extremely important. Along with the drawing, it gives the effect of mass, of both inertia and movement, the qualities which give Daumier's work its power. When the double effects of light-contrasts and color-contrasts are reduced to a common denominator of gray, the massiveness of his forms is largely dissipated. With any painter who depends upon elaborate or novel color-effects, with Titian, Rubens, Delacroix, Renoir, Cézanne, or Matisse, the impoverishment of form is enormously increased. This principle explains



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the futility of the universal practice in colleges, universities and popular lectures of using photographs, even colored ones, to give an adequate idea of paintings themselves.

In Renoir, drawing is accomplished largely by the use of color. Relations are indicated not, as with Ingres, by sharply defined lines of contact between surfaces on which the color is evenly laid, but by gradual transitions through intermediate tints, variously illuminated. The specific color-values are all-important for such indication of form, and without them the form is thin and tenuous. In Cézanne, the rôle of color is different, but no less important. He indicates contour not so much by varying degrees of illumination, as by modulations, that is, patches of color of varying quality, and since the light-values of the different colors are often indistinguishable, a photograph of a Cézanne is likely to miss almost entirely the impression of massive reality conveyed by the original. With Matisse, color is of prime interest because of the very unusual chromatic combinations employed: the contrast is an important factor in the form, and the distortion of outline which may appear to be Matisse's distinguishing feature is really in large measure a means of making the most effective possible use of color-contrast and harmony. In a photograph, in which color cannot be reproduced, these distortions appear arbitrary, that is to say, formless.

We have stated the general principle that form and matter are two sides of one reality, not two realities. Consequently when a painter makes of a particular type of form an end in itself, it is likely to degenerate into a formula, almost a mannerism, because the form of a great painter includes his own vision and temperament and these cannot be duplicated. An instance of such degeneration is to be found in the Florentine preoccupation with sculptural form, that is, with the representation of solidity. Even so eminent a painter as Leonardo fell a victim to this preoccupation. The general design of his paintings was usually subordinated to the purpose of making figures appear as solid as possible. The result is one obvious type of "form," which has been regarded by many critics of painting as aesthetic form par excellence, but which is almost a matter of ritual and, therefore, semi-mechanical. The overemphasis on solidity in Leonardo's figures detracts from the aesthetic value; monotony replaces unity and variety. In many of the lesser Florentines, Luini, for example, the "form" of Leonardo, so understood, becomes no more than a piece of

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technical display, a trick. It is then a symptom of aesthetic poverty and one of the many varieties of academicism, to which the facile display of light effects in the academic imitators of Monet furnishes a more recent analogue.

In the matter of relative richness of forms, we may compare Leonardo with Renoir. In Leonardo the effect of sculptural mass, of modeling, is preëminently achieved. Detail, including color, which does not contribute to the indication of contour, is almost ruthlessly eliminated. All the parts of the picture are located in space with reference to one another in masterly fashion, so that "form" in this sense is realized in a high degree. But it is realized at the expense of many other forms which if introduced would bring out the qualities of the objects represented much more fully. Light, for example, is used chiefly in its rôle of emphasizing shape and solidity, and consequently seems relatively abstract, artificial. Relation of principal figure to background is usually schematic rather than organic. In Renaissance times, the full wealth of natural appearance by which man and nature came to be integrated into a single organism was overlooked. Leonardo's work, like that of many other artists of his time, shows in consequence impoverishment of both form and matter.

Renoir was of another period of time, of a different temperament, and he had different interests—and we see those facts in his work. He lived after naturalism and impressionism had explored the resources of the actual world, after man had been seen as a part of nature, and technical means had been found for showing him in that relationship. Renoir's use of color, both impressionistic and individual, is the chief means to this end. It makes apparent the continuity of all the parts of his pictures at the same time that it adorns and vivifies them. His more extensive repertoire of forms and his richer material texture, go hand in hand: he could paint more detail because he could make a more comprehensive synthesis than Leonardo. To suppose Leonardo's form greater than Renoir's form is therefore a sign of the same kind of superficiality as that which confuses rhetoric with sublimity.

This is not to say that Leonardo is rhetorical in the same sense as Guido Reni, Giulio Romano, or Luini. But his work too often reveals that he was fundamentally a scientist preoccupied with what was, in essence, a scientific problem. He perfected one kind of formal organization to the extent that his pictures tend in the direction of formula-working, and this always partakes of the



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nature of rhetoric. In contrast, Renoir's work shows that he was first and always an artist, keenly alive to the ordinary affairs of life. He saw them comprehensively in natural, human values, and he let himself go in putting down the astounding numbers of forms that life had shown to him.

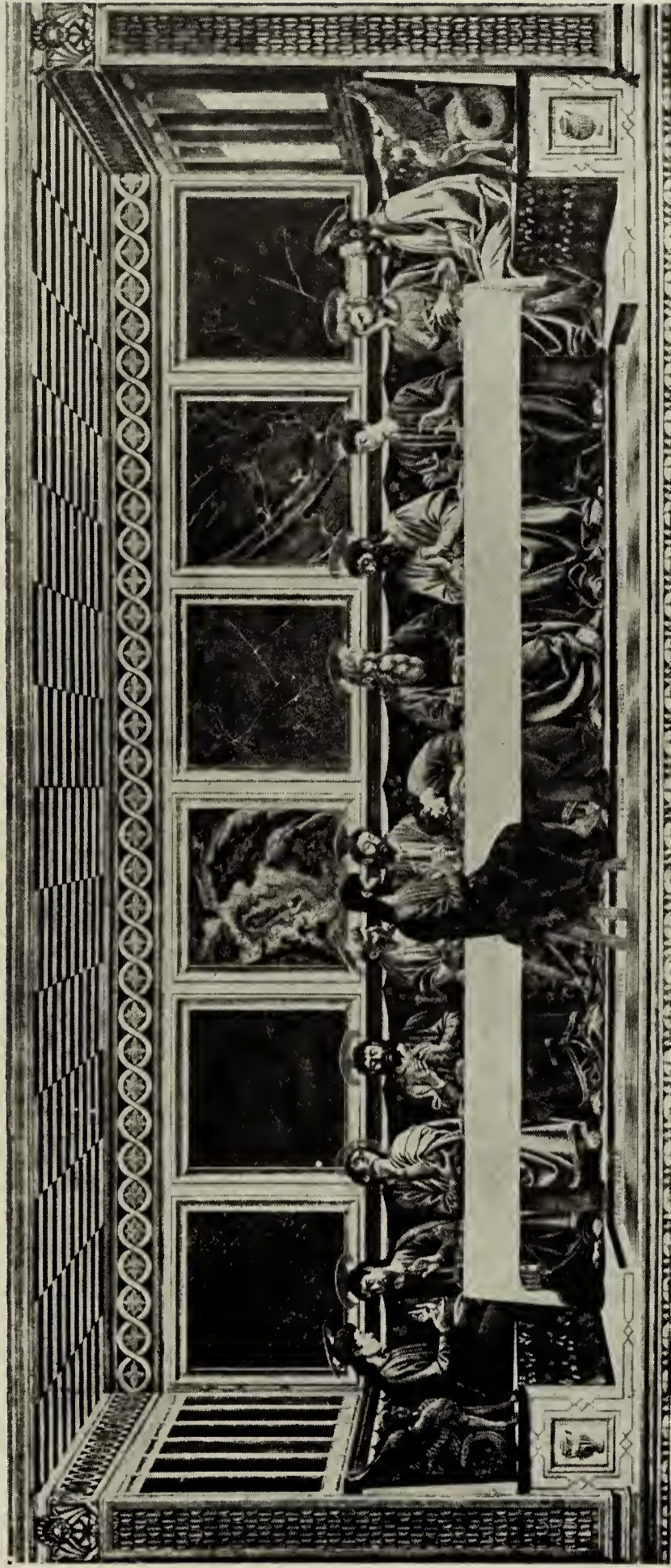
The fact that any single type of organization if exaggerated becomes mechanical, may again be illustrated by Rembrandt. With him, chiaroscuro is in very great measure the agent of design and modeling, and often with great success. He too, however, occasionally fell into the error of making something which is valuable as a means an end in itself, and when he did so the results are as disastrous as such results invariably are. In the famous "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails," the effect of light is so exaggerated that we have what is essentially melodrama. It is striking but cheap, the sort of thing that suggests academicism animated by ingenuity rather than imagination animated by genius. There is "form," no doubt, but it approaches perilously close to the forms that are manufactured with a lathe, and these are discoverable in great profusion in the work of Rembrandt's imitators.

### VI. PLASTIC ART AND DECORATION

We know that it is by means of form that the artist gives expression to his essential grasp, perception, or vision of the world. In addition, any work of art has also an immediately agreeable quality of its own, apart from the interest of what is presented, and this is its decorative quality. We have already shown that decoration contributes to both the unity and the variety of a painting. Decoration is also something entitled to an aesthetic existence in its own name. The brilliance of color which satisfies the desire of the eye for stimulation, the graceful pattern which we find in the paneling of a wall, the designs on china, in an Oriental rug, are all intended to please without suggesting or representing anything other than themselves. Let us consider the way in which decorative, ornamental quality is added to pictures in which there is also expressive form.

It would be a mistake to suppose that decorative quality attaches preëminently either to the matter or the form of a picture, in the widest sense of these words. Expression, or expressive form, and decoration are the two, relatively, independent variables, and into each of them both matter and form enter. The difference is that in expression the use of form and matter is subsidiary to





Andrea del Castagno

Florence

Design achieved by contrasts and distortions and the use of a swirl.





Piero della Francesca (School)

Arezzo

This Fifteenth Century painting is one of the prototypes of modern design effected by means of contrasts and distortions.

Analysis, page 393





**Picasso**

**Barnes Foundation**

Similar to painting on opposite page in the use of line, color and space to effect design.





Courbet

Barnes Foundation



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presentation, while in decoration the painter need consider nothing but the relation of color, line, space, mass and so on, to other color, line, space, mass. But this does not affect the principle that adornment is as much a matter of form as it is of material. Just as the treatment of expression resolved itself into a discussion of form, so also does the treatment of decoration.

The pleasure we take in decoration seems to be of the same nature as the simple pleasure of health. Disease is maladjustment, it is the failure of our physical faculties to maintain an equilibrium. When equilibrium is restored, we have a sense of general well-being, which suffuses all our special activities. In it there is nothing so momentous that it thrills or exalts us acutely, but it is a necessary background to our more intense experiences, if these are to be satisfactory. We may say that expression corresponds to our specific powers or interests, and decoration to our general organic welfare. Decoration is thus also expression. It is the manifestation of the less individual and personal part of ourselves, the part which is more nearly common to all men.

In plastic art, decorative quality is a matter of simple design, balance, rhythm, pleasing combination of colors, and so on. All these factors enter also into expressive form; but their function as decoration must be discriminated from the part they play in representing an objective world. The detail in a picture organizes in reference to a focal point, often, but not always, close to the center. The reason is that balance of design contributes to equilibrium; it keeps the eye from feeling a tendency to stray outside the frame of the picture, and so promotes stability. In exploring the surface, the eye prefers to travel approximately equal distances to right and to left, and this is a part of our general preference for rhythmic activities. When rhythm is halted, things seem to be out of gear and we are uncomfortable.

Rhythm is a form of periodicity, a repetition at intervals, and we crave it insatiably in all forms of art. It appears in the work as a whole and again in the subdivision of a total organization into partial units or organizations, resembling the whole in general character, but differing in detail. The two towers of a Gothic cathedral which stand at the sides of the front of the building, frame in its façade and form the balance which contributes to equilibrium. Although usually alike in general plan, the towers are not exact replicas of each other, but differ enough to offer novelty to the mind as it turns from one to the other. If either

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were so entirely different from the other that the contrast outweighed the similarity—if for example, one of the towers of the cathedral at Rheims were replaced by an incongruous obelisk or a pyramid—the unity of the whole would be gone, and with it the aesthetic effect. Significant variation would disappear in the presence of radical incongruity, and the two elements in the relationship would not set each other off, but would, as we say, kill each other. The same principle applies to painting. The masses on either side of the center should have relations to each other that contribute to the sense of balance; not mechanically or without variation, but not with such a degree of variation as to obscure their essential functions. Mere repetition is tedious because it diminishes variety and offers inadequate stimulation, but if there is to be rhythm or symmetry there must be some sort of generic sameness between the elements balancing each other. That is, a number of elements satisfy the demand for adequate stimulation of our senses, and these varied elements go well together, that is, unify into an organic whole.

The most general principle involved is that of unity in multiplicity: our preference for curved over straight lines means that a straight line is usually too much of the same thing, and that frequent change of direction supplants monotony by variety. In a painting the varied elements form a general pattern, and into this the details must fit in a way that unity results. This is in no sense a formula, because it leaves room for almost indefinite variation when applied. Between the design or organization of the picture as a whole, and the smallest organizations that enter into it, there may be an indefinite number of intermediate organizations. As a rule, the more intrinsic interest we find in the organizations that serve as units in the complete structure, the less need there is for intermediate stages of unification.

The decorative forms in a painting may be literally innumerable, in that every element—color, line, space—that makes up the forms themselves may be interrelated with one another to provide an added aesthetic effect. This function of the color, line, space, is something over and above their function as constituent elements of the form which makes up the structure of the objects depicted. Experience enables the spectator to abstract these decorative elements and determine whether or not the relation of their constituents to each other is such that they unify into a distinct decorative form, or whether the relations are so diffuse that the



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elements serve as merely isolated sensory stimulants and are really formless. When they enter into forms we see the variety and unity which gives them a distinct art-value in themselves as units in the general plastic form of the painting. If the formal relation is absent, unity fails and we see only variety, formlessness, the inferior aesthetic significance of the thing that does not hang together.

On the other hand, a painting may have these decorative elements as distinct forms and still be of little value. A painting which attains to the level of great art is one in which the structural elements and the decorative elements unify into a plastic form which is satisfying by the very reason of the perfect fusion of all of its elements. If the decorative forms do not merge with the structural ones to make a unified whole, the painting sinks to the level of mere decoration and suffers correspondingly in the aesthetic power of its plastic form. Many, if not most, of the paintings in the annual exhibitions of the academies owe their appeal to the decorative use of color and line; and facile technical accomplishment, almost totally devoid of plastic significance, is crowned with prizes and popular approval.

There is another class of decoration which attains to a much higher level as art, but which is still far from first-class. Here we find a special skill in organizing decorative elements into rich and distinctive forms which merge to some extent with the structural elements. But when we abstract the respective elements, decorative and structural, we see that the structural form is of varying degrees of thinness. Almost all of Botticelli's work comes within this category. In his famous painting, "Spring" and also in his "Birth of Venus," we find a marvelously fluid, graceful line winding in and around all the objects and making a succession of patterns which add to the charm of the line. But when we look for equivalent value in the other forms which make up the total plastic quality of the paintings, we see only thinness. In other words, the facile, extraordinary, almost flamboyant decorative forms are accompanied by so little structural plastic substance, that we look upon the paintings as primarily high-grade decorations which cannot be considered seriously as works of great art. A step further toward fusion of the two elements is found in the work of Rubens, in which, although the decoration is what we see first, there is usually a solid substructure of other plastic elements with which the decoration merges sufficiently to give a composite plastic form of distinction and power. But

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it is only when we reach the highest levels of art, as we find them in Giotto, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Cézanne, and Renoir, that the decorative forms and the structural forms are so completely fused that the paintings function as perfect unities, wholly satisfying as plastic forms.

It seems to us that the distinction between the two classes of art, designated respectively classic and baroque, is due entirely to the preponderance of either the structural or the decorative elements. In sculpture, Michel Angelo is, in this sense, baroque, and the best Egyptian sculpture of about 2500 B.C., is classic. In Michel Angelo's famous statue of "Moses" in the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli at Rome, we find a preoccupation with decoration so great that it detracts from the obviously solid and truly sculptural character of the work as a whole. In the Egyptian sculptures of the period named, especially those represented in the De Morgan Collection in the Louvre, there is a three-dimensional sculptural treatment of great solidity in which the decorative elements are very much in abeyance. The effect of these Egyptian statues is one of unalloyed satisfaction, of deep peace; but in Michel Angelo's work the satisfaction is disturbed and often abolished by the tinge of ostentation suggested by the ornamental details.

### VII. QUALITY IN PAINTING

In every work of art there is something which fixes its degree of goodness or badness, and which eludes description in words. The work may have the indispensables of variety and unity and its forms may be clean-cut and readily placed in known categories. A poem may offer good ideas, rhyme, rhythm and consonance; a symphony may show a good use of melody, counterpoint and harmony; a painting may reveal skill in the use of line, color, modeling, balance, rhythm, all fused into a good design; yet the poem, the symphony or the painting may still fall short of greatness. In other words, there is in every work of great art a pervasive and subtle quality which defies analysis and for the recognition of which no rules are adequate. The term that seems best to hint at this indescribable something is the word "quality," used in the eulogistic sense.

Attempts to describe quality, in the sense here employed, usually result in little that is convincing. But that quality does exist and that its existence is recognized, is shown by the use of



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the terms "first-rate," "second-rate," "tenth-rate," applied to various degrees of goodness in nearly everything in life. Above the level of superiority that can be demonstrated objectively and upon technical grounds, for example, the traits that make a five-dollar cravat differ from a half-dollar one, or a painting by Picasso superior to one by Redfield—above these levels we attain to a nebulous atmosphere. In criticism of the finer kind required to discriminate between "The Assumption" by Titian and "La Belle Jardinière" by Raphael, no words can adequately tell the whole story. Ultimately it is the native sensitivity and the funded mass of experience, providing an infinite number of forms in subtle relationships, that shed illumination to the person thus equipped. Even though the quality is indefinable in words, it is not recondite and it can be at least adumbrated sufficiently to enable one to follow the clues given. In *The Egoist* by George Meredith, this adumbration is successfully achieved through the musings of Dr. Middleton as he sips his after-dinner glass of old port. Nothing he says about the wine itself would enable a reader who lacked Dr. Middleton's temperament and experience to participate in his pleasure. But by a skillful use of words and phrases relating chiefly to life in general, there is suggested a whole series of associations that penetrate to the intrinsic meaning of things in their aesthetic aspects, and from these hints the reader constructs the atmosphere which gives the setting of Dr. Middleton's enjoyment of the wine. In other words, Meredith's artistry builds up a form which allows a sensitive reader to reconstruct from his own resources an experience that enables him to appreciate the quality of the wine in the subtle essences of what makes that quality what it is.

Such is the problem of a writer who would attempt to convey to others a clear idea of the distinctive content that endows a painting by Giotto, Giorgione, Titian, Renoir or Cézanne with that quality which belongs to the very greatest artists. There are objective facts, color, line, space, which experience enables the spectator to perceive as distinctive forms which yield aesthetic satisfaction. But the forms themselves will have little significance except as decorative patterns or as units carrying the values of represented subject-matter, unless the spectator has within himself the spark of life which makes those forms living realities capable of setting in vibration feelings akin to those which the artist had when he painted the picture.



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This ultimate dependence of aesthetic appreciation upon something which must be felt, and cannot simply be thought, is the final proof of the affinity between art and instinct. Every instinct confers upon its possessor a specific sensitiveness. It makes him aware of distinctions which for another may not exist, and in making him aware of them, it causes him to be moved to emotion by them. The word "sensitive" ordinarily covers the meanings of both distinction and emotion. Amorousness finds attractions invisible to the cold in temperament, resentfulness discovers causes for anger to which the man of milder disposition is blind, the compassionate are moved to pity by what may leave others indifferent or even amused. In a similar way, the sense of beauty distinguishes between grades of "quality," and finds the distinction important, when those who lack it are oblivious of any difference, and consider it of no importance if it is pointed out to them. In the final analysis it is a matter of interest, and interests, as we have seen, are themselves determined by our instincts. The distinction between quality and its absence can be illustrated but not analyzed to its ultimate constituents. We must keep in mind that it is not a separate type or department of value but a difference between degrees of merit in the values already described, that is, in drawing, color, composition, plastic unity. Quality in painting is merely another name for the successful use of the plastic means and what these plastic means are can be objectively demonstrated. The degree of quality fixes the artist's rank.

## CHAPTER V

### ART AND MYSTICISM

WE have seen that the aesthetic emotion is something which is moving, which must be experienced, cannot be proved and cannot be communicated to other people of different endowment. In other words, the aesthetic experience is of a mystical character.<sup>1</sup>

Mysticism is a sense of union with something not ourselves. It is felt to be intensely real even though it cannot be demonstrated to any one lacking the mystic's sensibility. In its simplest form, it is found in the understanding that we have of those whom we know and sympathize with, and it is lacking in our feelings towards those who are strangers to us. Mysticism divines a kindred animation, a will, a consciousness in what appears to the non-mystic as alien or indifferent. In it, the barriers which ordinarily shut in our independent existence appear to dissolve, the self to expand, and our life to become confluent with another and a wider life in which we find our true self. It is a participation in an experience in which our own individuality is absorbed and carried along like a drop of water in a stream.

The sense of union with our environment depends directly upon the degree with which such an environment encourages and reinforces our wishes. We can do nothing without some degree of coöperation on the part of things about us: we need air to breathe, food to eat, light to see, and the means to satisfy our instincts, affection, anger, self-assertion. Ordinarily, however, the world compels us to circumvent obstacles, offer inducements, persuade indifference; in consequence, the sense of an alien world is rarely banished. Even the most cheerful people have, at times, the feeling of being alone, of being shut up in themselves. Those great agents of isolation—frustration and grief—are the most powerful deterrents to the mystical outgoing of ourselves in the world.

But there are times even in ordinary experience when everything seems as by a miracle to forward the causes in which we

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Buermeier, *The Aesthetic Experience*, pp. 142-155.



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are interested. At such times, the painful contraction of the frontiers of the self is at least in part abolished. When everything conspires to give us what we want, everything appears to be a part of ourselves and the sense of isolation falls away. We are conscious of an immediate expansion of our individuality, and this expansion, when vividly and profoundly felt, is the same thing as mysticism. To come home from abroad, to exchange an environment of strange customs for the ease of movement and comprehension which the familiar always offers us, is likely to be an experience tinged with mysticism. In the experience of falling in love, when the thoughts, the feelings, the desires, are met and answered, the self dissolves into a larger and richer existence. In all human experiences, in so far as there is truly harmony, the self is expanded, and the mystical emotion appears.

We can now understand why art and mysticism should tend to come together and coalesce. The world of art is a world which has been made by human beings for the direct satisfaction of their wishes. It is the real world stripped of what is meaningless and alien and remolded nearer to the heart's desire. Whatever man does of his own free will and for pleasure, is art in some degree; natural objects, however, discourage as often as they encourage free activity, and many of our creations, the objects made for our own use, liberate only a small part of ourselves. The material things of life and the contrivances by which material ends are achieved thus remain impotent to evoke our profounder and more personal emotions. Deeper harmonies can be set up only by objects embodying feeling and imagination, as well as inventiveness. It is these deeper harmonies, frustrated by our life in a world so indifferent to our feelings, that art sets in vibration. Through the expressive form, embodied in art, the spiritual interests which we have in the world are immediately stimulated and satisfied and the imperfect expressiveness or responsiveness of material objects is supplemented and heightened. In consequence, the world of art is felt to be endowed with the independent and yet responsive life which we always attribute to what answers to our feelings. Even the decorative quality of pictures increases their mystical effect in that it enables us to perceive readily, fully, and agreeably, and thus encourages a harmony between ourselves and what is before us. In this, it contributes to the mystical effect.

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We have mysticism at its height when the harmony between the self and the world, is taken as the key to all experience, when everything is felt to be full of life, and at heart one with ourselves. Then the indifference or lifelessness of most of the world is felt to be no more than illusion, and the mystic feels that he sees beneath appearances to the reality underlying them. The artists who are mystics in this sense are the mystics par excellence, and we find them in such painters as El Greco, Claude and Cézanne. In El Greco we have the Christian's mysticism, of a world dominated by supernatural forces. He reveals the pervasive life that the Christian mystic finds in all human experience. El Greco uses nature as a symbol to show the Christian's fears, struggles, aspirations, defeats and triumphs, all vitalized with the artist's intensity. In Claude, we are nearer naturalism, but nature is still humanized. Claude painted landscapes, but they are romantic landscapes interfused with something close to human life. In Cézanne, nature ceases to be the mere vehicle it was in Claude and becomes interesting intrinsically. Its vitality is its own. Cézanne takes us out of ourselves more completely than Claude, who takes us out of ourselves only to show us ourselves again in a different form.

Mystical effects, like others in art, may be counterfeited. In such a painter as Böcklin, we find an exaggerated mysticism, a mysticism which is literary rather than plastic. Its effect depends not upon plastic form, but on specious technical devices and in consequence its symbolism seems cheap and melodramatic. In the American painter, Arthur B. Davies, there is the same miscarriage of intention, and a lack of command over plastic means results in literary effects that amount to mere sentimentalism. Painters of that type are but feeble purveyors of the mysterious and transcendental because they lack the properly plastic force which would make of their poetry a substantial reality.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

IN the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to show that human nature, from which art springs, also determines its forms and sets its standards. In the following chapters we shall consider systematically the means at the painter's disposal and the success or failure of particular painters in their employment of these means. As a preliminary, we may summarize a few of the cardinal points of the foregoing discussion in order to emphasize what qualities in plastic art are needed if it is to play its proper rôle in giving satisfaction to human desires.

The relation of art to instinct is shown in the immediately satisfying character of art; to see adequately is an intrinsically satisfying experience, and plastic art is the means by which the experience becomes accessible to us. The artist saves us from the plight of having eyes and seeing not; that is, to have an eye systematically open to what is visually appealing is possible only if we have learned the artist's lesson. Thus does art educate our interest in perceiving the world.

The world which we perceive has in it many things, color, shapes, and lines, that may exert a natural charm. The colors of a sunset, the lines of a range of mountains, a ship, an automobile, even a piece of furniture, may have an aesthetic quality, and this simple quality is probably the germ of the aesthetic interest in its full development. It is the analogue of what we have called "decoration," the immediate agreeableness of certain sensations and arrangements of sensations. In a work of art, however, this "'a priori' beauty," as Bosanquet calls it, is supplemented by an expressive *form*. An object is more than a pattern of lines and colors; it is an individual thing, and its form, as we have seen, is what gives it individuality and significance. Its significance may reside in its appeal to our more specific instincts, or it may be due to the realization of mass and space, of the qualities common to all material objects. In either case, the particular colored and patterned object takes on a more universal appeal, and moves us not only by what it is, but by what it suggests and

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embodies. Obviously, the greatest satisfaction is possible from an object which combines these decorative and expressive interests and in which what is expressed is not only the universal qualities of the natural world, but human values also. To create an effective design of line and color is something; if line and color are made instrumental to massiveness, to distance, to movement, that is an important addition; if the dynamic masses in deep space are so composed and interpreted as to render the spirit of place in landscape, as with Claude or Constable, of religious elevation, as in Giotto, of drama and power, as in Tintoretto, of poignant humanity, as in Rembrandt, the total result attains or approaches the highest summits of artistic achievement.

Another important consideration is that each of the arts has its individual medium, and the forms and human values which it can realize depend upon the medium employed. Every art inevitably loses some of the values of the real world, because stone, paint, sound, or words can each represent or indicate only a portion of our concrete experience. The artist who lacks a sense of what his medium can do, and tries to incorporate into his art the effects appropriate to other arts, injures the aesthetic effect of his work. The painter must render his human values in plastic terms; he must make an object or situation move us by its line, color, and indicated spatial relations. Literature and music have duration in time; consequently, relations to what has happened or is going to happen are a legitimate source of aesthetic effect. But the content of a painting is all simultaneously present, and it cannot properly be eked out by past or future; hence the futility of narrative, or of what pass for "moral" appeals (as in Millet) in plastic art. It is impossible to put in words the criterion of plastic embodiment, to give a formula for distinguishing between what is and what is not properly integrated in the visible form of a picture. But a cultivated sensibility will discriminate between the pictorial realization of the values of actual experience, such as we have them in Titian or Giotto, and a recourse to literature such as that of which Delacroix was habitually guilty.

The achievement possible to any artist depends upon the command he has over his medium, though there is no precise correspondence between this command and his final rank as an artist. Manet was one of the supreme painters, from the point of view of technical mastery, but he was by no means an artist of the rank of Giotto or Giorgione. What is meant by mastery of medium



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may be clearly seen if we compare Manet's work with that of a very inferior man, Meissonier, who was a very competent craftsman but not an artist. He could give a very accurate detailed rendering of any material object or scene; but his work is totally devoid of any personal feeling or vision and is intolerably diffuse and feeble simply as painting. Nothing in it suggests that he saw things in the terms that paint could render: the distinction between essential and irrelevant had no meaning for him. Manet's skill in the use of paint eliminated what is plastically adventitious, and he had a feeling for what in the object represented will go into the medium of paint. It is this ability to feel the object depicted in terms of the medium employed which is the *sine qua non* of any kind of artistic achievement.

We are all familiar with the corresponding gift in literature. A man may command a good vocabulary and write grammatically; but if his phrase is never terse or pregnant, if he cannot tell when to elaborate and when to pack many ideas into a few words, if he has no sense for the metaphors underlying words, the meanings that cannot be put into a dictionary, he has no more style than a set of equations or a table of logarithms. In other words he is incapable of making words do what they can, and is, therefore, not an artist. Similarly, a competent painter of illustrations may be incapable of making paint do what *it* can do. He is then nothing but an animated color-camera.

BOOK II

THE ELEMENTS OF PAINTING





## FOREWORD

### THE RAW MATERIALS OF PAINTING

ALL the knowledge about the visible world obtainable through the sense of sight is that it is a flat surface made up of a patchwork of colors. The supposition that we see depth in space in the real world, that objects are at varying distances from us, comes to us, not from sight, but from experience which has involved the use of other senses and faculties. That is, we have learned that the muscular exertion required to pass through the spatial interval between ourselves and a given object, varies with variations in the appearance of the object. Hence, when we perceive vague or indistinct outlines in an object, we suppose it to be far away. In paintings, our perception of space is attained by our recognition of the symbols which the painter employs. If an object is remote, the symbols are, among others, a smaller size and an indistinct outline; a nearer object in the same line of vision overlaps one more remotely placed; slight differences in depth are correlated with differences in illumination: the curve of a cheek, the prominence of a shoulder, a contour of any kind, may be indicated by a continuous transition in light and shadow; very remote objects tend to look blue. In short, the painter portrays spatial depth by the symbols of perspective, of illumination, of color, and these qualities we judge by reference to the symbols which we have learned from experience with the world of real objects.

The painter's representation of the world is achieved by modifying a flat surface by means of line and color. It is by manipulation of these means that objects take on the appearance of different sizes, relative positions to each other in space, light, shadow, contour, and flatness or solidity. But these means are only the raw materials of art, and unless they are used for some purpose other than mere reproduction of objects, they fulfill imperfectly the function of a camera and have, for art, no significance whatever. Indeed, command of means in painting is analogous to acquaintance with the words and grammar of a language, which enables a person to say something, but by no means guar-



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antees that he will have something to say. For example, some of the most banal of contemporary academic painters can portray accurate perspective, give an astounding illusion of three-dimensional solidity, or show the effect of light in molding contour and modifying the visible color of things, with more technical skill than Giotto or Titian or Cézanne possessed. But with only this supreme technical mastery of means, the academic painter can no more produce a work of art than a newspaper reporter, whose vocabulary includes words unknown to Dante, can write a drama of epic significance. It follows that, while it is important to understand the material, the means, with which an artist works, that understanding enables us to see only the problems which he had to solve and the form taken by his handling of the technical means. The general tendency of academicians to base criticism of painting upon mere acquaintance with technical means is analogous to the literary criticism which would judge an author's significance by his spelling and punctuation.





Titian

Analysis, page 420

Louvre



Cézanne

Barnes Foundation

The design in these two paintings is very similar, showing irrelevancy of subject-matter to plastic value.

Analysis, page 484





Tintoretto

National Gallery

In this painting and the one on opposite page dramatic subject-matter and plastic form are successfully merged.

Analysis, page 428





Paolo Veronese

Analysis, page 428

Louvre





Greek—400 B. C.

Barnes Foundation

## CHAPTER I

### PLASTIC FORM

THE word "plastic" is applied to something that can be bent or worked or changed into other forms than it has originally; and the things that a painter can work into various forms are line, color and space: these are the plastic means. A painting is a work of art only when the means at the painter's disposal are used in such a manner that an individual and distinctive conception of an experience, actual or imaginative, is conveyed to the spectator. It will show not a literal reproduction of an object but a definite idea embodying one or more human values. It will be neither a literary nor a moral value, but a value which is communicated to us directly and without the intervention of any other agency than the specific plastic means—line, color, space. Plastic form is the synthesis or fusion of these specific elements. To be significant, the form must embody the essence, the reality, of the situation as it is capable of being rendered in purely plastic terms. A painter's worth is determined precisely by his ability to make the fusion of plastic means forceful, individual, characteristic of his own personality.

Plastic unity is form achieved by the harmonious merging of the plastic elements into an ensemble which produces in us a genuinely satisfying aesthetic experience. Plastic form is significant, in the ultimate and highest sense, only when it is a creation: an expression of an individual human experience in forceful plastic terms.

The most obvious plastic element is color. It has an aesthetic value quite independent of its function of representing the surface color of real objects. Indeed, the aesthetic significance of color is the most difficult of all to judge and is the source of much confusion on the part of novices and even of advanced critics. The novice is subject to many pitfalls in this respect—the mere sensuous appeal of varying degrees of brilliance, individual preference for particular colors, unconscious comparison with well-known objects of definite color content—all these standards are far from the aesthetic criterion which alone fixes the real



status of color as one of the plastic means. Its importance in painting is neither imitative, merely sensuous, nor even primarily that of surface decoration: what it is, will be indicated in later chapters.

Another of the primary plastic means is drawing—and here again reigns a confusion similar to that noted in connection with color. The novice looks for the type of drawing which is a replica of the way colored surfaces of real objects intersect to form line and contour. He forgets that the artist's work is not to copy literally the lines and contours of objects, but to so select, modify and accentuate them that there emerges a *creation*, constituting his individual version of the object. His success is a matter for aesthetic judgment and not for simple comparison with the original object.

In the flat surface of a painting, color and line make up all the objects depicted. If there were no attempt to indicate the fullness of spatial depth, if objects were placed as flat representations on a single plane, color and line would be the only plastic elements required. But such a painting would have no aesthetic significance unless there was an arrangement of the colored and drawn masses into some sort of relation with each other; and this arrangement is termed composition. Even in the pattern of a carpet or wall paper, composition, in this sense of relations, is present. To have an aesthetic appeal, the distribution of the elements in a pattern must have such a sequence of line and mass, a relation to each other, that they show an arrangement, an order, a balance which we find satisfactory to our sensibilities. Thus, mere pattern is the beginning of art expression in so far as it shows that the creator has chosen that particular arrangement in preference to others physically possible, but without as much aesthetic significance. In other words, color and line have been *composed* and the result is a design, a union of color and line to give a single aesthetic effect. Design is present when the color, the line, the composition, instead of being independently conceived, mutually affect one another and form a new unit. To alter any of these elements would disturb existing relationships and would destroy that particular unity. Consequently, if a design is completely satisfying aesthetically it means that that particular arrangement of masses, that particular coloring, those particular shapes and sizes of objects, harmonize better with each other than would another series of relationships between the various components

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of the design. And this principle of unity may be said to be the ideal according to which all paintings may be judged. The design of a picture consists of the general plot or handling of the various details, and it is the factor which should be uppermost in the mind of the person who wishes to discriminate the plastically essential from the irrelevant. Design in plastic art is analogous to the thesis of an argument, the plot of a novel, the general structure of a symphony, the "point" of a story: that is, the feature or detail which assigns to each of the other elements its rôle, its bearing, its significance.

A word of caution is necessitated by the present widespread confusion of pattern with design and with plastic form. Pattern, as defined on page 86 and in passages on Cubism (see Index), is always discernible in a good painting, but plastic form (page 85) is present only in a relatively degraded stage in the "abstract" painting represented by Cubism. Pattern is merely the skeleton upon which plastic units embodying the universal human values of experience are engrafted. Critics of the so-called advanced school prove by their writings that all that they see in paintings is mere pattern although they endow it with the oracular mystification of such terms as "plastic design" or "significant form." The needed clarification upon this point is furnished by Professor Dewey in the following statement:<sup>1</sup> "Unless the meaning of the term (significant form) is so isolated as to be wholly occult, it denotes a selection, for the sake of emphasis, purity, subtlety, of those forms which give consummatory significance to everyday subject-matters of experience. 'Forms' are not the peculiar property or creation of the aesthetic and artistic; they are characters in virtue of which anything meets the requirements of an enjoyable perception. 'Art' does not create the forms; it is their selection and organization in such ways as to enhance, prolong and purify the perceptual experience. . . . Tendency to composition in terms of the formal characters marks much contemporary art, in poetry, painting, music, even sculpture and architecture. At their worst, these products are 'scientific' rather than artistic; technical exercises, sterile and of a new kind of pedantry. At their best, they assist in ushering in new modes of art and by education of the organs of perception in new modes of consummatory objects, they enlarge and enrich the world of human vision. But they do this, not by discarding altogether

<sup>1</sup>From *Experience and Nature*. Professor Dewey's text has been slightly condensed.



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connection with the real world, but by a highly funded and generalized representation of the formal sources of ordinary emotional experience."

In all design, whether or not involving distortion, there are two important principles which deserve mention. These are rhythm and contrast. It is rhythm that first strikes our attention and produces the pleasure that holds us longest. No plastic element in a painting stands by itself, but is repeated, varied, counterbalanced by similar elements in other parts of the picture. It is this repetition, variation, and counterbalance that constitutes rhythm. Each of the plastic elements may form rhythms with like elements—line with line, color with color, mass with mass—and each of these rhythms may enter into relation with the rhythms formed by other elements. The simplest form of rhythm is that in which the bending of a line is matched by similar modification in another line. This may be a simple repetition, or it may take the form of a meeting, intersection, and balance of lines in which duplication plays a small part, as in Poussin's "Arcadian Shepherds." Color may be likewise repeated, varied, balanced, in such a way that the rich, pervasive, powerful rhythm gives to the painting its chief characteristic, as in Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre" or in Renoir's "Bathers." These rhythms, supplemented by rhythms of line, light and mass, permeate every part of the picture, contribute to the composition, and form an ensemble which constitutes design in its highest estate. Such fusion of rhythms, at its best, has an effect upon our sensibilities comparable to the harmonious merging of chords and melodies in a rich symphony in music.

As with rhythm, contrast may be of various sorts. Chiaroscuro, as Rembrandt used it, derives from the contrast of light and dark its powerful dramatic effect. In many Dutch landscape paintings, a placid episode is contrasted with dramatic trees and sky. A vivid contrast between foreground and background is to be found in Fra Filippo Lippi's "Virgin Adoring the Child": the Virgin and Child are disproportionately larger than the figures and masses behind them, and much lighter in color. In this case, the fact that the background has the effect of a screen greatly heightens the general contrast. The power of Giotto's earlier compositions is largely due to his success in unifying the two sides of his pictures even when the contrast between them is so striking that they seem radically disparate.

Matisse is an example of very successful color-contrast. Or

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the contrast may be between different sorts of technique: broad areas of color may appear in one part of the picture, divided colors in another. This sometimes appears in Van Gogh, who also diversified his effects through contrasting direction and size of the brush-strokes. The principle of all contrast is that of combining variety with unity, but it advances beyond the general principle in emphasizing the fact that variety is effective in proportion as the difference between the elements involved is unmistakable and dramatic.

To the experienced observer of paintings, it is the design that is revealed at first glance, and determines whether or not the painting is worthy of further attention. The study of a painting consists in nothing more than the determination of how successfully the artist has integrated the plastic means to create a form which is powerful and expressive of his personality. Defects in plastic form are revealed by ineffective use of line, color poor in quality or inharmonious in relations, inadequate feeling for space, stereotyped, formulated or perfunctory use of means, overemphasis of one or more of the plastic elements. In short, plastic form is lacking when the halting, inadequate, unskilled use of the means fails to effect that unity which is indispensable in a successful work of art. Either the artist has nothing to say or he lacks the command of means to convey an idea in plastic terms.

Painting which makes no attempt to portray spatial depth, that is, the third dimension, represents plastic form at its simplest. It may embody fluid graceful line, harmonious color, flat masses and surface space, all so composed that the relations establish plastic form of a high order, even though quite simple. It is true that scarcely any painting is absolutely flat, even that of the Byzantines or Persians: there is usually some indication that the different parts of the painting are not literally on one plane, as are the figures in a rug. The objects almost invariably appear to be at varying distances from the spectator's eye, though this effect may be achieved in ways other than the utilization of perspective or deep space. In many Persian miniatures, for example, the depiction of different scenes will be upon the same plane, the scenes placed one above the other; thus a substitute for perspective is achieved. While the design in flat painting may be satisfying, such plastic forms remain comparatively meager and correspondingly deficient in reality.



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In general, if there were no depth, there could be no solidity, no rendering of planes one behind the other, as they exist in the world as we know it. It is obvious that to render the depth and solidity of objects, the illusion of deep space must be created by plastic means. In flat painting, in which objects can have only two dimensions, they can have no depth, cast no shadows, cannot bulge or recede, and cannot be felt to be solid. Color remains superficial, sequence of line is chiefly mere pattern, light is divorced from pattern and can play no rôle except to modify the quality of color, and composition is reduced to arrangement of objects above and below, to right and to left. But when deep space is conceived, color, line, composition and design are endowed with new possibilities of individual and interrelated treatment, which increase greatly the painter's power to create new and more complex plastic forms that move us by a multitude of realities not possible in merely flat painting.

Plastic form and reality go hand in hand—that is, an attenuation of means results in a form which leaves out of account much of the actual quality of things which in art, as in the real world, moves us so deeply. When a painter uses any of the plastic means inadequately, the fullness, the richness of his work suffers to the extent of his lapse, for it is a characteristic of good art that it gives a reality more convincing, more penetrating, more satisfying than actual objects or situations themselves give.

While it is true that painting which portrays spatial depth is, in general, richer in plastic values than painting which approaches flatness, it is *not* true that mere depth or solidity of objects is the factor which determines the relative worth of such paintings. It is possible to get an effect of depth and solidity by tricks of perspective or modeling, in which event the third dimension becomes mere virtuosity; instead of reality we get a specious unreality, more unreal than a frank two-dimensional pattern. Spatial depth and solidity of objects have aesthetic value only when they are achieved by plastic means harmoniously coördinated with the other plastic elements; that is, when they function as elements in a unified design. Therefore, it is obviously absurd to judge the relative merits of two painters upon the success with which they render the illusion of a solid figure extending into deep space. For example, a figure by Renoir has not, generally, the solidity of a figure by Cézanne; such a figure would not enter harmoniously into the plastic form, the lighter, more delicate general design of

the Renoir; Cézanne's design conveys the effect of austerity and power, and anything but a solid figure would be a disturbing factor. In short, spatial depth and solidity are not to be judged by any absolute standard but only by their contribution to a unified plastic form.

The merits of relatively flat painting and of three-dimensional painting which realizes solidity and spatial depth can be compared only when we observe how the artist has used color and light. One often sees paintings where color is merely laid on the surface like a cosmetic; it has the quality of tinsel, of something added after the object has been constructed. Instead of increased reality we get an effect of falsity, of unreality, and the painting lacks organic unity. Color is usually not a property merely of the surface of objects as we perceive them in the real world. The gray of a stone seems to spring from its depth, to go down to the body of the stone; we see it as a solid object and as a gray object; the color is perceived as part of the structure of the stone, not as something laid on. In painting, the failure to include color in form reduces the degree of conviction carried by form, and makes the total effect relatively cheap, tawdry, unreal.

Not less important than color, in attaining a convincing and real three-dimensional character, is the use of light and shadow. In painting that is two-dimensional, light functions through modification of hue or tint so that the shade of a color is partly determined by the light that falls upon it. In three-dimensional representation, solidity of an object is achieved by having the most light fall upon the point nearest to the source, from which there is a continuous gradation to deepest shadow. The swells and hollows are portrayed by means of the rise and fall of illumination. In other words, solidity is rendered by color and light correlated, and that correlation constitutes the modeling of forms. But it is obvious that this correlation makes possible another aesthetic effect: such use of color and light that they may each form independent and separate rhythmic patterns which in turn form rhythms with the other plastic elements. For example, in Bellini's "Sacred Conversation" the pattern made up of the light and shadow placed in various parts of the canvas, is one of the principal components of the plastic form: it is totally independent of the function of the light and shadow in giving indications of position and contour. Similarly, in Titian's "Man with the Glove," the pattern formed by the light used to render the solidity of various parts of the head



and hands, does much to organize the picture. In general terms, the artist has used a particular plastic means to portray the essence, the reality, of the subject and also to enrich and vivify as well as unify the design.

The plastic element which determines the character of three-dimensional painting is deep space, and this is achieved by the use of perspective. It need not be literal perspective as we perceive it in the real world: it must be used plastically, that is, changed or adapted by the artist to particular needs. Perspective conjoined with the modeling makes possible what is termed "space composition." This is something over and above the third dimension achieved by the utilization of line, color, light and perspective to make an object appear solid. It is different from "composition," as that word is ordinarily employed to describe the arrangement or distribution of masses in a painting. Space-composition is such an arrangement of things in the depth of space that the intervals, back and forward as well as up and down and to right and left, are felt to have a pleasing relation to each other. We feel the intervals not primarily as three-dimensional qualities, as we do in perceiving solid objects, but as the space itself which surrounds those objects. Space-composition moves us aesthetically when each object is so placed in its particular position that we perceive the space around the object in a definite relation to the space around each of the other objects, and that all these spaces are unified, that is, composed. If there were no objects there could be no space between them; hence space-composition involves both the objects *and* the intervals of space. It is the sequence of objects and spaces so ordered that they form a pattern which we perceive as a thing in itself. Space-composition is successful when it enters into relation with the other plastic elements to give a plastic form which functions as a unified whole; in other words, when the painter has been so successful in suggesting planes receding, advancing and interacting with each other, that the whole series of spatial intervals between objects, as well as the objects themselves, interests or charms us. Space-composition contributes enormously to the reality of total effect, since in our commerce with the real world we not only see objects but move among them. We live in a world of space and we see objects in relation to remoter objects: a tree with a wall beyond it, a house against a background of hill or forest. Our mind is filled with these forms. When an artist enriches them with his deeper perceptions and feelings, and molds

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them into designs richer than our unaided powers could construct, we share his larger vision and deeper emotions.

We have seen that plastic form is satisfactory when there exists an integration, a balance of its factors, that is, when they unify. As one progresses in the study of plastic art, a great variety of falls from plastic unity reveal themselves. A painter, unable to enter fully into his subject, to see it in its concrete fullness and with an eye to all its relations, or one with an insufficient command over all the plastic means, produces but an inadequate substitute for a unified painting. He may single out for emphasis some one feature and slight the others, treating them sketchily, perfunctorily or conventionally. When this happens, we have what is termed formula painting or academicism, and while often the parts treated are done very skillfully, the skill is mere virtuosity: the painter, no matter how adroit, is not genuinely an artist. Line, or light, or modeling, or perspective, or the relations with surrounding objects that enter into space-composition—any one of these may be accentuated to the point of submerging the other aspects of the object or situation. When this occurs proper integration of the various plastic means is not achieved and the result is comparative unreality.

Intelligence guides us to reject as uninteresting what we find unreal: we cannot accept as real what we feel does not represent an object or situation in all its aspects, *in its concrete fullness*. This principle, so true in real life, is equally true in all the forms of art. For example, in poetry Swinburne's spontaneity, variety and subtlety of rhythm produce an exceedingly brilliant effect. But the flow and surge of his verse is soon seen to conceal an inner emptiness; mere rhythm is made to serve for the imaginative grasp of the subject that should vary both the ideas and their expression by all the poetic means. This constant repetition of rhythm without other poetic content becomes mere virtuosity. Verbal magic destitute of meaning constitutes unreality. In music, Berlioz and Liszt have a great command of orchestration, but their themes are almost invariably commonplace and conventional, their ideas are thin, and the orchestral dressing fails to conceal the essential triviality. Here again one factor is given an exaggerated rôle to cover up a lack of real substance, and the effect is one of showiness or melodrama, of unreality.

The conception of plastic form, as integration of all the plastic means, will be used in this book as the standard and criterion of value in painting, and hence all the analyses and judgments that



follow will be an illustration of its meaning. To clarify what is meant by integration of plastic means we may anticipate the later discussion and consider Raphael as a striking example of inadequate plastic form. Raphael has often been looked upon as one of the greatest of all painters. He was undoubtedly a master of his medium and possessed extraordinary ability to put down what he had in mind. He had a great command over line, his ability to use light to indicate contour and to make a pattern was of a high order, and in space-composition his gifts were unsurpassed. But these accomplishments were largely borrowed, his line and light from Leonardo, his space-composition from Perugino. His color is superficial and undistinguished in quality; it is thin, dull, sometimes garish, and it seems rather an afterthought in the design. His composition is almost invariably conventional; it has not the freshness and the inevitable fitness that we see, for example, in Giotto, so that for all the spaciousness and airiness of his pictures we never get the impression of a really original and powerful imagination at work. His borrowings he has made in some measure his own; but they are not sufficiently changed to indicate that they are really a creation of a strong personality and a distinct mind. His subject-matter lacks originality and is generally so sweet and soft that one feels that he saw things sentimentally and that they produced in him commonplace and rather trivial emotions. In other words, he had no vigorous personality to serve as the crucible in which the qualities of things should be fused and welded into a new form. The result is that his particular means remained disjointed from his conceptions as a whole, and his light, line, and space-composition stand out as isolated devices, as exploits of virtuosity. He did achieve a form of his own, and his great technical skill enabled him to attain marvelous results, but the efforts are often specious and the effects tawdry.

For examples of the use of plastic means so disintegrated as to be mere tricks or mechanical stunts, we may examine the picture by Guido Reni entitled "Dejaneira." We find almost nothing expressive of the painter's individual grasp of the subject, and correspondingly there is no real synthesis of the plastic means employed. The pattern and composition are effective, but these are taken directly from Raphael and executed less competently. The impression of movement is rendered skillfully, but it is so much overdone that it suggests histrionics rather than art. The color is without charm or originality, and is simply laid upon the

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surface. It is so little integrated in the plastic form that another set of colors might be substituted with no damage to the total effect of the picture. What we have is a mere assemblage of devices without inner coherence and contributing to an effect that is conventional, strained, and exceedingly tawdry.

The recognition of the balance or integration of plastic means which constitutes plastic form comes only from experience in looking at many kinds of painting. There can be no rules by which we can fix a degree to which variety and brilliance of color, elaboration of grouping, rhythm of line, etc., must be present, and then say that if any of these factors fall below such a point, there is overemphasis on the other factors. Colorists like Rubens and Renoir cannot be accused of overaccentuation of color because they realized other aspects of the world in plastic terms equally strong, so that it is clear that they did not conceive *exclusively* in terms of color. In the work of both of these painters we see significant line, movement, composition, effective spacing, both on the surface and in the third dimension. Color serves not as the only source of effect, but as an organizing principle. Renoir's drawing, for example, is done in terms of color, and though the incisive line characteristic of Raphael or Leonardo is absent, the effects to which line contributes—movement, fluidity and rhythm—are rendered with great success. Although the kind and degree of solidity which we find in Leonardo, Michel Angelo or Cézanne is absent in Renoir's figures, they do not seem vaporous or unreal. They have substance, mass, actuality, though not in the same manner and degree as do the figures in the work of painters whose primary purpose was different.

The way in which emphasis of one of the plastic means may be united with subsidiary but sufficient realization of the others is further illustrated in Rembrandt. He employed chiaroscuro, that is, a bright area surrounded by darkness: light surrounded by heavy shadow serves as the point of departure in most of his pictures. He avoids overemphasis of his special means by making the tones in connection with light function as color more powerfully than any colors of Leonardo or Raphael. In the portrait of "Hendrickje Stoffels" and in that of "The Old Man" (in the Uffizi), minute variations in the golden-brown light give a richer, more glowing and actually more varied effect than all the colors of the spectrum used by a lesser artist. When, as in the "Unmerciful Servant," Rembrandt introduces bright color



the effect is one of marvelous depth, richness and fire. This same combination of economy of means and great effectiveness is to be found also in his line and composition. In space-composition, for example, the use of chiaroscuro narrowly circumscribes the space at the painter's disposal, yet in the "Unmerciful Servant" the effect of roominess achieved is comparable to the fine spatial effects of Perugino or Poussin.

In general terms we may say that in painting, as in all other forms of art, whatever quality is selected as setting the dominant note must be ballasted and made real by being shown in a context of other qualities, and when this is not done the effect becomes conventional, cheap, tawdry, unconvincing, and unreal.

The "reality" which we consider to be the essence of art-value in painting may be illustrated by reference to the subject-matter portrayed by the French painters, David and Delacroix. In David, there is constant recourse to stage-settings, poses, themes, reminiscent of classic antiquity. In Delacroix's exotic, Byronic themes, there is a similar indication that the world in which we actually live is beneath the artist's serious attention. In both cases we are conscious of an artificial or theatrical quality, and this conviction that the painters are playing a game or acting a part is not affected by the fact that the histrionics were doubtless free from deliberate insincerity. What they portray of poignancy, pathos, tragedy, significance, existed in the world about them. If they did not find them there, we are justified in concluding that they did not know what they are, and that their portrayal of them is essentially a caricature, a set of figments out of daydreams.

This condemnation of "classicism" or "romanticism" is not based upon literary considerations, but upon plastic ones: antiquarianism or sentimentalism betrays itself in limited and unoriginal command of plastic means. The painter does not really draw inspiration for his art out of his own personal experience but depends upon other painters for the methods by which his pictorial effects are produced. David's "classic" calm, or rather coldness, is due to a line which he took from Raphael and Mantegna and they took it from ancient sculpture. It is not something which the artist actually saw as a part of a personal and coherent view of real things, but a studio-device to which the qualities of color, mass, and space were added as an afterthought. These qualities do not really fuse with the line to produce an impression of reality, but remain adventitious, just as the "noble" or "distinguished"

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figures and situations painted remain strangers and phantoms in the world in which we actually live.

The same is true of Delacroix. The stormy emotion, the exaggerated gesture and violent drama, are almost as spectrally unreal as David's "nobility," and they mean the same inability to *see* the actual world about him. Delacroix does not seem so artificial either in subject-matter or in plastic quality as David, because romanticism was for him less a pose than classicism was for his predecessor, and because he did more to modify and reorganize what he took from others. His color represents an advance over Constable's or Rubens's in that he showed a degree of originality in the methods he took from them. Consequently, he seems more real, and so more interesting and a greater artist, than David.

We realize how essentially fantastic David and Delacroix were when we compare them with later painters. The concern with actually existing scenes, persons, and situations made of Courbet and his successors the legitimate successors of Velasquez and Goya, in making us see the objective qualities of things, divested of the subjectivism that constituted the romanticists' exhibited world of self. To sympathy with Courbet's insight we owe the great painters of 1870—Manet, Monet, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne—and the imaginative telling of the story of life in a real world. Of that group, Renoir and Cézanne deal most objectively with the whole range of experience as men find it verified in themselves, free from the trifling, the insignificant, the preoccupation with theory, method, virtuosity, or personal vanity. If one looks beneath the dissimilarity of techniques, Renoir and Cézanne are seen as close kin in dealing with the fundamental, universal attributes of people and things. Both treated the familiar, everyday events that make up our lives. We see, feel, touch the particular quality that gives an object its individual identity. Each of the painters created a world richer, fuller, more meaningful than that revealed to our own unaided perceptions. Each mirrors a world we know by having lived in it, so vividly that we get a sense of going through an actual experience. Both are great artists because they make art and life one by convincing us of the truth and reality of what they see and feel and express.

Cézanne, indeed, stands out as a unique figure among the painters of his time, if not of all time, because of the success of



his passionate impulse to penetrate into the forms and structures of things. His constant pursuit of reality, in order to grasp it and portray it in its essence, was akin to the zeal and thoroughness of the investigator in science. Where Renoir found poetry and charm in everything, Cézanne found weight, mass, volume, texture, tactile qualities. He was critical and analytical, with a high intensity of mind and spirit in his search for facts by which to attain to the secret springs of form and structure. It was a passion that mastered him, that made some of his work seem cold and stern and hard. The intensity of this passion explains the freedom from mere tradition, from the litter of academicism, that makes his mature work unique. It kept him faithful to his own vision, and produced the refinement that compels our attention to the significant, the momentous attributes of people and things, stripped of triviality and irrelevant detail.

Only a power to merge thought and feeling, to engraft relevant emotion upon substantial fact, to lend to an object his own life, kept such a personality out of the realm of science and within that of art. The spirit of science scarcely emerges as we live with him in the stirring adventure he fairly revels in as he works out forms, textures, and designs in the world he so magnificently transforms for us. We see only the forms constructed of radiant, singing color, the melodious spaces, the harmonious, rhythmic, decorative design, the fitting quality and degree of emotion. He welds reality, truth, and beauty into an experience which we feel to be a reflection of the world, created by sheer magic out of the materials we live among every day. It is a world full of human interests, of enlivened and enriched associations, with their mysterious moving qualities of depth, majesty, calm infinity. It is these and similar qualities ever present in our commonplace world that he animates for us with a pervasive rhythmic beauty and vitality. Cézanne's work has a power of self-assertion, and arrestingness, which always compels attention and in time makes the work of painters who lack his grasp of reality seem comparatively savorless and tiresome.

## CHAPTER II

### PLASTIC FORM AND SUBJECT-MATTER

WE have said that a painting is to be judged by its plastic form and not according to its subject-matter; but that does not mean that the appeal of the painting, as a concrete reality, is not due in part to what is shown in it. It is impossible to maintain that the value of subject-matter and plastic values are in any absolute sense separable. It is true that relevant judgment or criticism of a picture involves the ability to abstract from the appeal of the subject-matter, and consider only the plastic means in their adequacy and quality as constituents of plastic form. In that sense, a picture of a massacre and one of a wedding may be of exactly the same type as works of art. We abstract from each the form which is made up of the plastic elements—line, color, space, composition—and determine the quality of that plastic form as an organic, unified fusion of those elements. Until one has formed by study and long experience the habit of seeking the plastic form, the intrinsic appeal or repulsion of subject-matter itself will constitute the chief pleasure or displeasure afforded by pictures. Many painters who are unable to master the plastic means to create an individual expression, seek to awaken emotion by portraying objects or situations which have an appeal in themselves independent of an artistic conception or rendering of them. This attraction may be dramatic, sentimental, religious, erotic or what not, but whatever it is, it sins against the canon of "reality," that is, complete integration of the plastic means. A popular vote for the best painting at academy exhibitions always results in the selection of a picture representing a mother and child, or a nude, or a pretty landscape, even though the one chosen has no qualities that entitle it to be called a work of art. This sin is not of modern origin but dates from the beginning of painting, and many pictures in the Louvre, the Uffizi, and all other large galleries owe their reputation and their preservation almost solely to the character of the subject-matter.

It is no easy task for a person to banish from his mind the



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subject-matter and concentrate upon a study of the manner in which color, line, space, and mass are used, and how they enter into relations with each other. To accomplish that result means the breaking up of a set of old, firmly established habits and the beginning of new ones. But, as in other activities where genuine interest drives, once the new habits are started, they tend to operate almost automatically, so that after a time, one may become so familiar with a painting as to think of it only in terms of color, line, mass, space, plastic form. For example, of the hundreds of paintings upon detailed analysis of which this book is based, scarcely a score are known by the author in terms of their subject-matter, whether that be, in its general nature, religious, sentimental, dramatic.

Difficulty is ordinarily encountered in appraising justly a painter who habitually accentuates those human values, religious, sentimental, dramatic, in terms not purely plastic. Raphael sins grievously in this respect and so do Fra Angelico, Mantegna, Luini, Murillo, Turner, Delacroix and Millet; and for that reason they are all second- or third-rate artists. Even the greater painters, such as Rubens, are not always immune. The error, indeed, is the same as that we have already discussed, in that it is usually by the excessive use of some plastic device that the overexpressiveness of subject-matter is effected—although the two are not fully identical. Ingres's effects are melodramatic in the plastic sense—they are dramatically linear—but not in the expressive or emotional sense, as are so often, say, Delacroix's. The criterion for both of these forms of melodrama, the plastic and the expressive, will appear as we consider command over plastic means. When mastery of means is assured, when there is a definite balance of one means with another, there is a legitimate aesthetic effect: the appeal of the subject-matter is integrated with the plastic form, and sentimentality or melodrama does not exist, no matter what the subject-matter may be. In other words, the values contributed by the subject portrayed are not specious or extraneous and any degree of emotional appeal is properly aesthetic. A painting may be dramatic, religious, or expressive of sex to an indefinite degree without being specious, cheap, pornographic or tawdry. The principle is precisely the same in the other arts, literature for example. Only the hopelessly prudish could find vulgarity in *Madame Bovary* or *Anna Karenina*, even though their subject-matter, marital infidelity, is the same as that of



Greek Vase—500 B.C.

Barnes Foundation

Note distortions of naturalistic appearances.





**El Greco**

**Barnes Foundation**

Design achieved by means of distortions and contrasts.





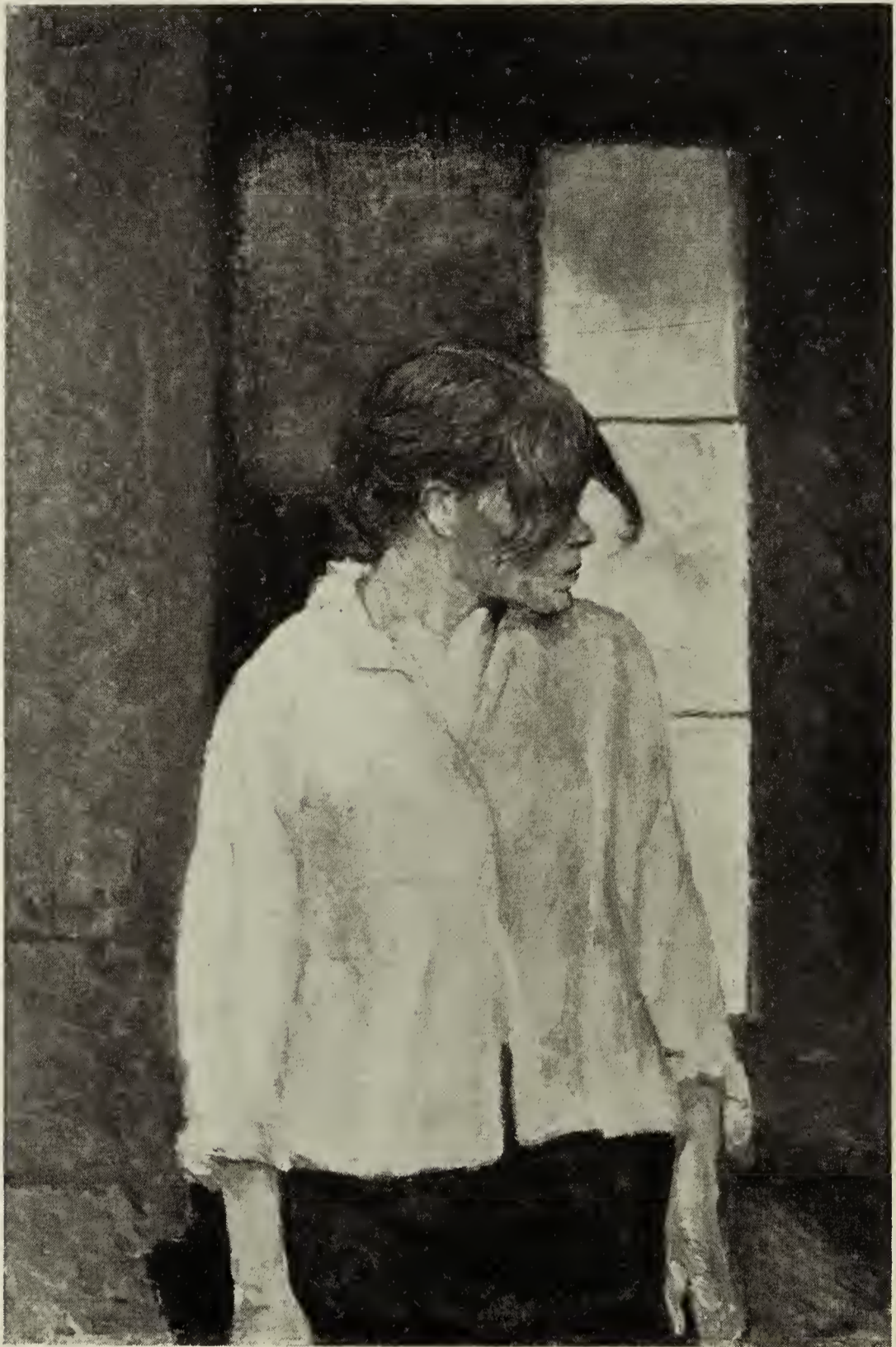
Picasso

Barnes Foundation

Modern version of El Greco's design.

Analysis, page 502





Toulouse-Lautrec

Barnes Foundation

Design achieved by contrasts, including modernized chiaroscuro.

neighborhood gossip, the newspaper, or the divorce court. It is the manner of conceiving a subject, the ability to do it justice in terms of the artist's materials, that determine whether the effect shall be false, tedious, disgusting or beautiful. Here again the criterion is that of reality, which means that any quality or effect taken in isolation is unreal, and what is unreal is uninteresting, fails to stir us.

Success or failure in integration of the values of subject-matter with plastic qualities may be made more clear by considering some random illustrations. In Titian's "Entombment," the subject is solemn, sad, pathetic; but we feel that these emotions are restrained and dignified. So much for the obvious, represented subject-matter. When viewed plastically, the picture presents a group of figures unified into a firmly knit composition. The drawing is highly expressive of movement and gesture but does not indicate exaggerated grief or despair, such as we should expect to find in a lesser man's treatment of the same subject. The color though glowing does not flaunt itself, but is of a subdued richness which pervades the whole canvas and contributes to the compositional unity. The robes in the bending figures to the right and left are brighter in color and serve as a sort of secondary frame, enclosing the members of the group, and setting them off from the background. The color, in other words, functions as an organizing principle. Finally, the use of light brings out the figure of the dead Christ, and is so distributed over the whole canvas as to form a design in itself, enhance and harmonize the color-values, contribute to the composition and heighten the sense of mystery and awe characteristic of the event depicted. In this painting it is both the intrinsic interest of the event and the perfect coördination of all the means, color, light, drawing, space, which make up the total aesthetic effect and establish the painting as one of the great achievements of plastic art. One need not, however, be a Christian, or indeed have any special interest in the event itself, to obtain from the painting the rich human values, the nobility intrinsic to sympathy, solemnity, tragedy. These values are rendered abstractly by means of color, line, mass, space, all unified into a rich, rhythmic design.

In the Titian just discussed, the subject-matter itself is characterized by restraint, but quite the opposite qualities may be realized aesthetically provided there is fusion of the plastic means. In paintings by El Greco, Tintoretto, Michel Angelo and Rubens,



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the subject-matter is often violent, tumultuous, or ecstatic in character, but it is so rendered in plastic terms that we get a sense of satisfaction and peace. In many paintings by Delacroix, subject-matter is beginning to get the upper hand, and while we recognize his command over certain of the plastic means, especially color, we feel the theatrical character of the presentation and recognize that it is due to a failure to knit form and expression into an organic whole. In a religious painting by Guido Reni the balance between subject-matter and plastic means is usually completely destroyed, and we perceive a sentimental narrative almost devoid of art value. The perfect fusion of plastic means, even in the works of the greatest artists, is by no means found in all of their work. For example, in Titian's "Christ Crowned with Thorns," there is a tendency to overemphasis of light, to sharply drawn lines more nearly like Raphael's, and the melodramatic element begins to creep in at the expense of plastic form. In Paolo Veronese's "Flight from Sodom," the plastic design is perfectly realized by a fluid rhythm of line, color, mass and space, all gracefully flowing in the same direction and giving a plastic form fused perfectly with an intense and dramatic subject-matter. In his "Jupiter Foudroyant les Crimes," on the other hand, we see motion and drama with an almost complete absence of plastic equivalents.

The religious theme is realized best in plastic terms by Giotto and El Greco, with an effect of great dignity and peace in Giotto, and of mysticism and ecstasy in El Greco. With lesser men the religious theme became perfunctory, trivial, or specious. Fra Angelico represents a certain stage of this descent, and although he has charm and a simple piety, his pictures owe their popularity to values that are sentimental and literary rather than plastic. In Murillo, the decay of the Spanish religious tradition is much further advanced than that of the Italian in Fra Angelico; here the mysticism of El Greco has become an insipid sentimentalism, with resort to exaggerated lighting and a sweetness which suggests the consummation of Luini's and Andrea del Sarto's exploitation of Leonardo's worst features. In Millet we have humanitarian religion, unsupported by the necessary plastic means, with the inevitable sentimentalism. When expression is overemphasized the effect is akin to that of photographic reproduction and is indeed often attained by similar means, that is, by literal representation. For example, sadness in a face may be represented by a few lines merely bent in certain directions;

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such representation is mere literal illustration. In Correggio there is disbalance between the values of subject-matter and values truly plastic: his women tend towards sweetness, in the manner of Leonardo and Raphael, and he too makes an excessive use of light. In his "Jupiter and Antiope," though the color is pleasing, the composition effective, and the general design of a high order, there is a tendency toward superficiality in the color, together with a lack of variety, of richness; there is also a suspicion of triteness in the composition. There is more light, and more sweetness, than a perfectly balanced plastic form permits.

Renoir in many of his pictures shows the charm of femininity in a lyric or idyllic setting which in the eyes of a superficial observer is likely to verge upon mere prettiness. But Renoir's mastery of his medium enabled him so fully to realize his conceptions and to surround obvious charm with a wealth of plastic qualities, that the distinctive poetic charm is achieved by legitimate means. In the presence of a fine Renoir we feel that he was deeply sensitive to obvious, but very real, sources of delight in the world, and that he saw them as so much a part of the actually existing world, so thoroughly interwoven with the other qualities there, that his version of them is free from any touch of sentimentality. Renoir's interest in subject-matter is revealed in terms that are plastic in high degree.

Delicacy, grace, even fragility can be found in many of the greatest paintings, as in Fragonard's "Pierrot," or in Velasquez's "Infanta Marguerita." In these pictures the artist's grasp of plastic essentials is so sure that the quality of the subject-matter lends a heightened charm.

The development of painting in modern times took place in large measure contemporaneously with the revival of classic culture which we know as the Renaissance. Attention was concentrated upon the sculpture of ancient Greece and upon the many antique Roman sculptures found in excavations conducted in the neighborhood of Rome. It was inevitable that classic traditions and themes should appear in the work of the Renaissance painters. The classic influence was of great value so long as it was thoroughly assimilated and merged with the spirit of the age and rendered in plastic terms individual to the artist. Such merging is always a matter of degree; in Michel Angelo, for example, the heritage from the Greeks was completely incorporated into the artist's own spirit. In his Sistine Chapel frescoes the



classic influence is clearly perceptible, but it takes on a new form. In Mantegna, on the other hand, the themes often seem to be lifted bodily from antique Roman sculpture, and there is the inevitable failure so to embody these themes in a setting of line, color, space, as to make them really live. The integration is accomplished perfectly in Claude, and in his use of a Virgilian glamour and romantic mystery there is no hint of falseness, of a sluggish imagination taking refuge in mimicry. He was able to make the ancient spirit live again under another sky, and to give an adequate and very personal plastic form to a world conceived both classically and romantically.

In contrast we find in the French painter David the classicism which is a mere formula, a rattling of dry bones. In Ingres the classic tradition is also clearly seen. It inspired him, as it did Raphael, to a vivid sense of the effects possible by emphasis on clear-cut and pervasive linear quality, and his use of these effects was vigorous and personal. But David's classicism was destitute of any personal insight or vision, and his conventionality is reflected also in his stereotyped rendering of every aspect of subject-matter. His frigid correctness is superior to the self-conscious antiquarianism of the British Pre-Raphaelites only in that he knew more about his subject and could make a more skillful use of his brush.

We have seen that plastic deficiencies that are not due to simple technical incompetence, almost always take the form of over-accentuation in one or another of its various types. The reason for this is that a painter who has nothing of his own to show, but who possesses a certain amount of technical skill, can only imitate what some one else has shown. Usually, he borrows the more striking features, the mannerisms, makes a formula out of the original; the result is overemphasis of what is borrowed and relative neglect of everything else. When a painter has great technical skill, he may do this so successfully as to deceive the inexperienced observer; hence, if we are to understand and judge any painter justly, it is necessary to know at least something of the history of painting. The salient feature of this will be sketched briefly in subsequent chapters; but first a more adequate account of the plastic means will be given.

## CHAPTER III

### COLOR

As we have seen, color is the most obvious of the plastic means and comes nearest being the raw material of painting, since all the other elements, line, light, etc., may be regarded as modifications or aspects or results of color. Color has an effect which depends upon its intrinsic quality, independent of all relation to the other constituents in the aesthetic ensemble of the picture. We all know that some colors produce quiet and restful effects, while others produce the exact opposite; and the fact cannot be questioned that the specific sensations of color with which a picture presents us have much to do with its appeal, both immediate and permanent. In Raphael, for example, the color, simply as sensuous material, is rarely good and if we abstract it from every other quality of the picture, we ordinarily find it either indifferent or displeasing. It is usually like the colors in a cheap rug or fabric—either dull or overbrilliant. In Giorgione, Cézanne or Renoir we see quite the reverse in the immediate sensuous charm that pervades and heightens all the more complicated effects. The effect is not unlike that which simple physical charm gives to personality, in making moral and intellectual qualities more vivid and appealing, more intensely *felt*, as well as judged favorably or approved.

Variety or richness, and harmony, add greatly to “quality” in color, both in the picture as a whole and in the separate parts, elements, or units. In the great colorists, Giotto, Giorgione, Titian, Rubens, Renoir, Cézanne, there seems to be no limit to the multiplicity of hues and tints introduced into the simplest object, an orange, a cup, a hand, a lock of hair; yet these color-chords are invariably units in themselves. The effect of unity in diversity is repeated again and again, with successively more comprehensive units, until we come to the picture as a whole, which seems a symphony of color, in which the direct sensuous appeal is enormously heightened by the sense of the relations between the colors employed, with each color setting off and being itself set off by all the others. The abstract values we experience are charm, delicacy, unity, reality.



## THE ELEMENTS OF PAINTING

In order to appreciate the aesthetic significance of color as the great moderns used it, we must be acquainted with the values of color as illustrated by the Venetians, above all by Giorgione, Titian and Tintoretto. These painters employed colors which are intrinsically pleasing, and are diversified and harmonized to yield the maximum effects; there is a magnificence in these effects which has never been equaled. Renoir advanced beyond the Venetian tradition by utilizing the contributions made by Rubens, by the Eighteenth Century French painters, especially Fragonard, by Delacroix and by the impressionists, so that in the richly decorative aspects of his surfaces he is without a peer. On the other hand, the extreme richness, the voluptuousness of his color, detracts in some measure from his strength: there is in Giorgione, Titian and Cézanne a greater effect of power.

In contrast, Leonardo shows a relative barrenness of color. In both the Paris and the London versions of his "La Vierge aux Rochers," the color not only lacks obvious appeal, but in its variation throughout the picture there is a lack of inventiveness, of a sense of the possibilities of variation and harmony. It is mainly tone; when the tone is lighter in shade it seems to have an effect merely of shininess, when darker, of muddiness. Color itself, and color-relations, detract much from the value of his plastic form.

It must be remembered that sensuous charm or richness in color is not the same thing as brightness. Colors which are bright without being rich or deep give an effect of garishness or gaudiness, and the general effect is of superficiality. Lorenzo Monaco and sometimes Kisling, a modern artist, are examples of bright color which gives no sense of glow or splendor, while in Daumier and Rembrandt, though the colors are very subdued, there is no effect of drabness or dinginess.

Variety of color does not mean variety in the sense of employment of all the colors in the spectrum. Rembrandt's subtly modified dark tones suggest a great variety of color, and Piero della Francesca used chiefly a silvery blue so modified and varied in shade, so tinged with light and shadow, that we feel in him a rich repertoire of color, and are conscious only upon reflection of the economy of his means. If Delacroix's colors were taken out of his canvases and arranged side by side as in the spectrum, his vastly greater actual variety would be revealed, but a good Piero hung beside a Delacroix would show that Piero was the greater colorist.

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We have hitherto used the word "richness" in a way that might be construed to mean "variety," as when we say that there is great richness of color in Renoir, and comparatively little in Perugino. But there is another sense of the word for which we may find a synonym, by a figure of speech, in "juiciness," which means something opposed to "dryness." This is present nearly always in the greatest masters of color, in Titian, Rubens, Delacroix and Renoir. Its opposite, dryness, is not, however, a term of unqualified reproach. Poussin is a great artist and an important colorist, yet the color in his pictures is almost invariably dry. The distinction is thus not always one between good and bad, since there are aesthetic effects to which dry color is a positive reinforcement; a painter may use very juicy color, like Monticelli, without thereby becoming an artist of the first rank. Again, if Puvis had emulated Renoir in the use of color, his own distinctive form would have suffered rather than gained.

We have discussed color in isolation from the other plastic means, but not all the differences in color-quality can be made clear unless we consider the relation of color to light, composition, modeling, etc. Color combines with light to form what may be called atmosphere, and this may be a most important element in aesthetic effect, as in the Venetians, in Rembrandt, and in the impressionists. Furthermore, light has a direct influence upon color, and the incapacity to take advantage of this influence is a serious defect in plastic form. In the world of real things, color changes in quality under different degrees of illumination, and the ability to utilize the alteration so effected is an important part of the painter's command over his materials. When light is not properly used in connection with color, plastic reality suffers because of the absence of the modification and enrichment that light works upon color. Instead of bringing out and revealing new harmonies within color, the light seems to efface color and act merely as a substitute for it. In Leonardo and Raphael, too much light overdoes the contrast between light and shadow, and, in addition, the light fails to make the color function vigorously. The contrast between light and shadow is even more striking in Rembrandt, but his handling of color-indications is so skillful that the chiaroscuro is utilized as an enhancement of color and not as camouflage for lack of it.

The use of light in connection with color as atmosphere is to



be seen conspicuously in the Venetians, in the painters of the Barbizon School, and in the impressionists. It appears for the first time in the work of the Fourteenth Century Florentine, Masaccio. In the real world, atmosphere blurs the outlines of objects at a distance from the eye. This naturalistic effect is in Masaccio's painting increased by an addition of color to the simple haze of nature. Except among the primitives, almost all painters reproduced the blurred outlines of distant objects, but the effect of atmosphere as a luminous color in which all things float is not universal in painting. Sometimes, as in Whistler, it is an obvious imitation of mist; sometimes it is a source of melodramatic pseudo-romance, as in Turner; but when employed with discrimination, as in Claude and the Venetians, it is a powerful reinforcement having its own aesthetic effect. It is usually golden in Claude, in the Venetians it is golden with an admixture of rose, and in Corot it is silvery. As a translucent atmosphere, a circumambient glow, it supplements or blends with the local colors, augments decorative quality, aids in knitting the composition together, and thus functions as an important element in the plastic form.

The rôle of color in drawing and composition is as important as its joint function with light in creating atmosphere, but it may be more conveniently discussed in the chapters dealing with those topics. There remains one other important distinction in the use of color to be discussed at this point. Color may or may not seem to be a part of the actual structure or mass of an object. As we have seen, the usual manner of rendering solidity is by showing a graduated increase in light or shadow. Such modeling was developed to a very high degree of perfection in Leonardo and Michel Angelo, and since their time it has been the usual method of giving the impression of solidity. But modeling has a richer plastic value when the artist is able to give the impression that color is an integral part of the solid structure. The Venetians were the first to realize this structural use of color and it became an important plastic resource in subsequent great painters, notably Rubens, Delacroix, Velasquez, El Greco, Renoir and Cézanne. In Giorgione, Titian and Tintoretto, a solid body does not appear as something which has substance in itself independent of color. The substance seems to be built up out of color, that is, the color seems to go down into the solid substance and permeate it. In every detail in

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Titian's "Man with the Glove" color seems to be the actual material out of which the form is wrought, as it does in Tintoretto's "Paradise." In contrast, Leonardo's effects of solidity are largely independent of color: there is not a great deal of color at best, and what there is is usually superficial. In Ingres's paintings, we usually get the impression that the form was completely fashioned or molded before any thought of color entered the painter's mind; the result is a lack of that solidity which one sees when color is used structurally. The color is in evidence in Ingres, but it seems something added after the substance has taken shape and consequently it lacks the full plastic reality one finds in objects structurally rendered in color as, for example, in Cézanne.

The preëminence of the Venetians as colorists is due to the successful use of color both in the structural sense and in the form of a circumambient glow which suffuses every part of the canvas. The separability of suffusion and the structural use of color is illustrated in Albertinelli's "Christ Appearing to Magdalen," in which we have an approach to the suffusion characteristic of the Venetians, but in which color functions only feebly in making up the structural solidity of objects. The relatively dark colors in the foreground and the silvers and blues in the background seem to swim in a light haze which brings the masses and spaces into beautiful harmonious relationships. The effect is the abstract feeling of gentleness, of peace and delicate charm. Strength, in the sense of power, seems to be entirely absent, yet the painting is one of the most satisfying of the whole Renaissance period.

A pervasive color effect of an entirely different kind is best illustrated in Giotto. His color is not structural in the Venetian sense, though we are conscious of a perfect harmony of color and form. The atmosphere is usually as clear as crystal, and the colors stand out like jewels, in contrast to the Venetian glow in which there is a suggestion of translucency amounting at times to a haze. In spite of this crystalline transparency of Giotto, the pervasive color, into which reddish, yellowish and bluish tints merge, is extremely marked, and adds much to the elevated and mysterious effect. The religious character imparted may be expressed if we say that in Giotto the world is *transfigured*, and that the limpid, sparkling color-glow is the main agent in the transfiguration. In Rembrandt, though the actual



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color is very different, we find the same mystical effect, the same sense of reality without any approach to photographic realism, and here too the effect is due to the same extreme sensitiveness to color-values and ability to render them by subtle yet unmistakable means. Indeed, the mysticism which art at its best conveys seems to attach itself in a peculiar degree to the masterful handling of color, and points to the fact that color is *the* source, *par excellence*, of the highest "quality" in painting. (For detailed analysis of these effects, as of those referred to in the following, see Appendix.)

Another form of color-effect is that in Piero della Francesca. In him we have neither the solid structural use of color, nor the juiciness which is so often a sign of great ability in color-handling. His color is unmistakably dry. His total effect, of an all-embracing coolness, requires exactly the colors which he uses. The basis of this effect is blue; but it is a blue so infinitely diversified by light that it becomes a whole series of blues with only the most subtle distinctions between them. They are so juxtaposed and blended with other harmonious colors, cool greens, grays, reds, as to provide a complete set of new and distinctive color forms. This dominant note of coolness is Piero's characteristic form, and is perfectly blended with the drawing, composition, expression, etc., to create a distinctive note of the highest aesthetic excellence.

With this we come to the topic of color-design. The foregoing illustrations embody effects perceptible when we isolate color from all other plastic elements and consider it as a thing in itself. But there are types of definite color-designs other than the glows or suffusions of which we have been speaking. In Tintoretto's "Paradise" and in Renoir's "Bathers," the rhythmic flow of color is an essential part of the general effect of fluid, graceful, swirling movement, and forms a rich color-design which plays its part quite independently of the other elements.

A somewhat similar effect is to be found in Poussin, whose color is rather dry, and though it cannot be called superficial, is not deeply structural in its function. But its flow and rhythm extend to every part of the canvas and make up a design well in harmony with Poussin's general form of delicacy and "choice-ness." The color-design reinforces his linear and compositional rhythms, and appears as a distinguishable but perfectly merged element in his plastic form.

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In "Mona Lisa," Leonardo really makes color function successfully, a rare achievement with him. The deep, rich brownish reds in the sleeve of the figure, duplicated in the neighboring background, are an organic part of the form, and not only contribute to tying it up and making it real, but form a definite color-design. This is unusual for Leonardo, for even in his most successful picture, "Bacchus," the color adds but little to the design. Indeed, one of the chief reasons for denying to Leonardo a place among the greatest artists is his inability to merge light with color, as they are merged whenever either appears at its best, as in Giotto, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Rembrandt, Renoir and Cézanne.

The use of color to make a design is well illustrated in Soutine, a contemporary painter. Soutine's characteristic form is that of intense movement, of passion, and his choice and combination of colors is peculiarly adjusted to this effect. His hot, juicy, vivid and varied color is the antithesis of Piero's, yet both men achieve color-design of a high order.

In Fra Angelico, we have also a pleasing bright blue, but with less sense of harmony with other colors. Instead of the pervasive charm of Piero or the brilliance and power of Giotto, we have a staccato effect as one color follows another across the canvas, and this, though it forms a design of a kind, is not aesthetically very moving. The actual quality of the color is sometimes pleasing, but the color-relations are too reminiscent of those of other painters, and this deficiency is made more serious by the fact that they are usually superficial. Only in one picture, the "Crucifixion," does integration of the plastic elements really take place effectively. In this, the color is more nearly organic and its quality is comparatively juicy instead of, as usual, acid. The color-relations there really play a part in making up the plastic form.

In Perugino although the color is not deeply felt or organically used and lacks juiciness and richness, it is occasionally as in his "Combat of Love and Chastity" in keeping with the design, which is in general light and delicate, tasteful rather than moving. In Raphael, there is almost no real color-sense. If we abstract from the other elements and look for a color-design, we usually find nothing of great aesthetic significance. Everything else, light, line, placing of masses, modeling, pattern, is practically complete without color, though he was sufficiently skillful as a



painter to avoid that gross misuse of color that would obviously weaken his general design. Usually his color is academic, that is, taken from other painters and with little or no individuality in its use. Occasionally, as in the "Madonna with the Blue Diadem," and the "Donna Velata," color contributes to the ensemble effect. In his famous Madonna, "La Belle Jardinère," one must be able to ignore the color to enjoy the fine linear effects and feeling for space. The color, when abstracted, is garish and drab, in spite of the bright red of the dress. The good modeling with light loses its force by reason of the absence of color, which is called for to make the figure live. The effect is doughy and pasty, as of a statue in soft plaster. Raphael's inferiority as a colorist appears again in the contrast between his "Count Baldassare Castiglione," where there is lack of harmony in color relations, and Titian's "Man with the Glove." In both pictures the color is present mainly as tone, but in the Raphael it is superficial, dry, monotonous, and it has little or no value as a design.

In "The Ascent to Calvary," by Simone Martini, the bright colors make a pattern lending vivacity to a picture which is essentially illustration, rather than a complete plastic form. Their brightness does not make them really moving; nevertheless their ensemble effect fits in well with the general form of the picture. In Mantegna, the lack of quality in color-relations, their failure to form a design, is sometimes a positive drawback. That this is not due to the specific colors used is apparent from the fact that the dark greens which appear in the Louvre pictures by him are used by many other painters, and with no effect of dullness or muddiness. In "The Agony in the Garden," he appears to better advantage, for there color does function successfully in unifying the design and enriching plastic form.

In the use of color academicism is very common. Raphael is an instance of this at a comparatively high level of skill; in his imitators, Guido Reni and Giulio Romano, the imitation of Raphael is doubly academic, and is not merely indifferent but offensive. The Venetian glow appears in the lesser painters of the school, Palma Vecchio and Sebastian del Piombo, but it has become an overaccentuation, a melodrama, with imitative character testified to by the general overemphasis, in gesture, facial expression, etc. In the Barbizon painter, Rousseau, Claude's color is academicized, with resulting artificiality and feebleness; the same is true of Van Dyck, in relation to Rubens. In Watteau and Fragonard, Rubens's

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style, including his color, is so modified and individualized and so adapted to new purposes that it becomes a new form of ethereal and delicate flavor. The Poussin tradition becomes academic, cheap, and tawdry in Le Sueur, whose color is hopelessly gaudy and trivial. His plagiarism is obvious and is unredeemed by any plastic force or reality.

The foregoing discussion, brief and incomplete as it is, shows how superficial is the view of nearly all the critics that color is a relatively unimportant element in painting. This view is definitely stated by Roger Fry; it is stated and then retracted by Berenson, but the judgments on pictures to which he gives expression in his books on the Italian painters, show how little he really appreciates the rôle played by color in plastic art. In aesthetic criticism of lower order, such as Mather's, there is no evidence of any intelligent conception of the function of color in painting. The importance of Giotto as a colorist, for example, is entirely overlooked, and so is the function of color throughout the whole Florentine School, which is said by Berenson to be preoccupied with "tactile values," that is, modeling—really a very secondary matter. Again, in the Venetians, though the rôle of color is emphasized by the critics named, its significance is never explained even in general principles, and there is no sign of any recognition of the extremely important matter of the organic use of color. This neglect is indicative of the failure on the part of critics to see that by far the most important characteristic of color is its capacity for actually contributing a part of the relations that make up plastic form, instead of merely being the material of the picture. That color-relations are all-important in the design, in the total form of a picture, that the highest and best form of composition is by means of color, is one of the most weighty facts in aesthetics, and it is one to which those who are most ready to write on plastic art seem to be totally oblivious.



## CHAPTER IV

### DRAWING

A COMMON mistake is that by which drawing is considered as a matter only of line defining literal contour and making a sharp edge or border between two adjacent objects. But even in some of the early painters, such as Giotto and Titian, drawing is a fusion of many elements, of which line is only one. When the linear motive is dominant, as in Ingres, line not only defines contours but functions as enrichment, both by its individual expressiveness and by its relation to other lines, masses, color, etc. It is this combination of plastic elements that makes up drawing in its proper sense. The expressiveness of line is something which can be detected and judged only after close observation and long experience; to summarize the results of such experience, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the manner in which line is used in its development from less to more expressive form through the history of painting.

Painting developed out of mosaics. In them, the definition of contour was necessarily very sharp, and this sharpness remained for a long time characteristic of painting. In Cimabue, the line of demarcation between one object and another is very clear-cut, so that the surface of the canvas is divided into what might be called color-tight compartments, and the line between them seems to belong to neither compartment. Line used in that manner makes a rigid fixity in the movement and expression of all the figures so that the actual impression of movement is lacking. Also, there is comparatively little integration of the lines of separate objects in a linear design in the picture as a whole. After Cimabue, the line became more integrated with light, with color, and with composition, so that these elements are recognizable only upon abstraction and analysis. At the start, the pictures seem like line-drawings to which color, light, etc., were applied after the design was essentially complete; subsequently, the drawing was conceived in terms of all the plastic elements, with the result of a great increase in unity, reality, and moving force. In Giotto, the line is no longer literal or isolated but a simple, terse and force-

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ful factor that compels the use of our imagination to grasp the significance of what it portrays. The line is still clear-cut, but the color and light on each side are merged with it to give an ensemble effect of more convincing reality than is possible from line alone; in other words, the line gets its force from the relations it assumes, and we say the line is "plastic." In the drawing of the individual objects, and of the picture as a whole, the sequence of line and mass is fluid, rhythmic and harmonized to make up the total design.

In Masaccio we have the first important step towards naturalistic effects in drawing, in the employment of blurred outline. In Andrea del Castagno, the sharpness of line is diminished through the use of the swirl, and this necessitates further simplification and abandonment of mere literalism, with the result that the expressiveness of the line, and its use in abstract design, is further heightened. In Fra Filippo Lippi, line is less expressive and powerful than in Masaccio and Andrea del Castagno, but there is an increase of grace and decorative quality, which adds to the effect of design. In Uccello, the line is less fluid and stiffer, and by reason of these qualities it has a quite peculiar effect in achieving individual design. Line is still very sharp in both these men, and has little or no effect of movement, even when the subject-matter is ostensibly dynamic.

In Piero della Francesca, there is still little effect of realism, but the line is more reinforced by color, and the general design is much more elaborate, varied, and powerful aesthetically. He gets many of the effects of drawing by means of color, without abandoning the clearly separate character of the two elements. The absence of movement or drama in his drawing is required by his generally quiet and detached style.

In Botticelli the line gives the effect of active movement, but it is so isolated, elaborated, and overworked that the result is a loss of plastic unity. The line forms an intricate series of arabesques, so feebly supported by use of the other plastic means, that the drawing is not really an element in structural form, but is rather decoration. The result is an effect of facile virtuosity which is superficially attractive but has little moving force. The line forms a pattern rather than a design, and is used without consideration of the appropriateness to subject-matter: in his religious pictures, for example, it produces a tendency to a swirl which is not at all in keeping with the spirit of the picture,



Leonardo's sharp line also stands out clearly, but, since it is merged with the modeling and is much more functional in the design, it is much less of an overaccentuation than Botticelli's. In "Mona Lisa," for example, the lines in the sleeves and in the background really give an impression of solidity and depth, as compared with the merely decorative quality of the more elaborate linear pattern in Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus." Leonardo's line was taken over by Raphael and made more incisive, more dramatic, more rhythmically varied, and on the whole more interesting as a design. In both men, the line often tended toward literal expression and oversweetness, and this is not entirely counterbalanced in Leonardo by the quality of solidity which he gives to his masses, or in Raphael by the impression of vigorous movement. Raphael's line is prodigal rather than terse, and consequently lacks the high degree of expressive power which comes with economy of means. His line is very sharp, is quite independent of color, and the light, by which it is complemented, heightens the sense of overdramatization.

In Michel Angelo line and color are distinct but are so well related that the drawing has a quality of great strength, which increases the reality and aesthetic appeal. His drawing was a modification of that of Signorelli and Cosimo Tura, but he endowed it with more power, merged it in a special way in the form as a whole, and used it to give expression to subject-matter of richer imaginative scope.

The drawing of the Venetians was an advance over that of their predecessors in that they made a systematic use of color and of blurred line. Since they used color as a part of the structure of objects and also in creating the Venetian atmospheric glow, the definition of areas by sharp lines was neither necessary nor desirable for the general design. The earlier Venetians, Bellini and Carpaccio, retained the use of sharp line and merged it well with color and light, though not sufficiently to attain the convincing reality found in Giorgione and Titian. In Giorgione the contours are comparatively little blurred but they do not stand out and cause the attention to be centered on themselves. In Titian, the objects often seem to melt into one another, and this represents the expressive function of drawing achieved with the minimum of means. Here line, color and light are fully synthesized, and drawing reaches its highest estate.

In Tintoretto the line, light and color are all completely merged





Renoir

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 473





Poussin

Louvre

Analysis, page 432





Boucher

Louvre





Chardin

Louvre

Analysis, page 449



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in the form of a swirl which is the most effective means of representing powerful movement and drama. It may also be adapted to other purposes. When the swirl is toned down and used to depict the hard, clear quality of textures, the organic use of the color prevents the clear demarcations from seeming like isolated line, and the effect is of greater solidity and reality. In Paolo Veronese, the line is on the whole sharper than in the other important Venetians, but is still so integrated in the plastic form that it is thoroughly real. In his "Flight from Sodom," the drawing is done on a large scale; the line pervades the whole picture, flows from object to object, and gives the effect of motion in a particular direction by its general disposition through the canvas. This pervasively unifying line is characteristic of all the best Venetian painters.

Compared with that of the great Venetians, Poussin's line represents a reversion. It is extremely expressive of grace, elegance, delicacy, charm, but it has not the reality of Titian's and is less firmly integrated with color. It is less incisive than Raphael's, and has less power than Leonardo's; but both of these attenuations are very well adapted to Poussin's designs, and they are used throughout the canvas in both their decorative and expressive rôles.

In Rubens, contour is sharper than in Titian but less sharp than in Raphael. His swirl necessarily gives the effect of broken line, so that within the confines of a surface there is less of the broad, unbroken area of color which throws hard contours into sharp relief. His line is repeated rhythmically over and over, and contributes strongly to the effect of animation and movement, but is less convincing and powerful than Tintoretto's, in which color is more deeply fused with all the other plastic elements.

Rembrandt's drawing is accomplished with extreme subtlety and economy of means. The merging of light, line, and color is so perfect that minute analysis is required to differentiate between them; in addition, the effects are more restrained and so more powerful aesthetically, than those of Rubens. There is perfect differentiation of masses, and yet the actual marks on the canvas by which this is done are scarcely perceptible. His subtle line is infinitely more expressive than Botticelli's or Raphael's in conveying feeling and characteristic movement or gesture with the utmost sensitiveness. There is this same subtlety in Velasquez: the chief difference from Rembrandt's drawing is that the reinforce-



ment of line is with Velasquez less by means of light and more by means of color. El Greco's line is the antithesis of Velasquez's. It is so distorted and so varied in direction, length, and proportions as to give an impression of emotional frenzy carried to the highest intensity. But the effect is real and genuine and not melodramatic—the activity of the line is perfectly matched by similar activity in the light, color and all other plastic factors.

Upon close inspection, Claude's drawing in objects seems inferior to that of the greatest painters. His line lacks terseness, individuality, expressiveness. But if we examine the drawing of the picture as a whole, we find line formed by the sequence of masses instead of by the definition of one mass against another, and that larger line is fluid, varied, rhythmic, and distinctive. Claude's design required the rendering of the lineaments of a total scene, which he was able to do better by slighting the drawing of the details of individual objects. In Boucher the line is quite hard and partakes of Botticelli's qualities of grace and sensuous charm, with much decorative and little real expressive power. Its sharpness imparts a delicate cameo-quality. Watteau and Fragonard show very soft contours, with a general tendency to diffuseness; Fragonard's drawing is stronger because a better fusion of color and line, accompanied by distortion, gives it a more positive effect in design. In Chardin the contour is sharper, but the drawing is so sensitive, expressive, and tempered with light and color, that it seems subdued and makes a strong but unobtrusive element in the plastic form.

In David, the drawing is the skillful, hard, cold and fundamentally trite drawing of the academician. In Ingres it is far more varied, more rhythmic, more sensitive, and is quite original. The classic feeling of coldness is present and the line is very tight; but there is a sense in which it is more effective than in any other painter. Although Ingres's pictures may almost be said to be made out of line, the line does much more than define the meeting-place of two distinct objects. It renders the basic feeling of the surfaces depicted without much aid from color and light, so that the line is the groundwork of the painting. In a measure, it does for Ingres what chiaroscuro does for Rembrandt, that is, gives an equivalent for the other plastic means. Of course, line cannot give the full equivalent; but it does function organically, and so is far less of an overaccentuation than it is in Botticelli, in whom it is little more than a pattern. Ingres's use of line is really art

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and not mere virtuosity, but it is not the greatest art, partly because this particular means is inadequate to bear the full weight of plastic form, partly because Ingres lacked the freshness and depth of insight of the really great masters: he did not have a great deal to say.

Daumier was another master of line, though of quite a different sort. His line, which is highly vigorous, concentrated, and expressive, coöperates with light and modeling to give an effect of great weight and solidity combined with activity. In some paintings his drawing is comparable in power and expressiveness with that of Rembrandt, and is executed by a similar use of light and color, combined with a sharper line.

Delacroix's drawing is comparatively negligible from the standpoint of original plastic expressiveness. In line, light and color it derives from Rubens, and is too often perverted to noisy purposes that are obviously narrative and psychological. This psychological *motif* was rendered with much more effect by Degas, who added the flexibility, variety, and skill of Ingres, and made a form in which the psychological expressiveness of line is given an adequate plastic embodiment. He had rare ability to render character and movement in line of great force, sensitiveness, and originality, and in a context of color and composition which assure a considerable degree of plastic reality. His form represents the consummation of a type of drawing which, while partly illustrative, is plastically satisfying in a high degree. In his paintings, as distinguished from his work in pastel, there is a tendency to rely too much on line without sufficient support from the other plastic means, so that in spite of the genuineness of his effects his paintings do not reach the highest level of achievement.

Courbet's line is comparatively hard, but his total drawing has distinction and power in conveying his particular realistic effects. In Manet, the line is merged well with the other plastic elements and his successful drawing tends away from literalism and more toward achievement of design. In Claude Monet, line is often almost dissolved in an excess of light and color, and the result is a loss of vigor, expressiveness, and strength of design. There is not the firm structure beneath the veil of color and light that there is in Renoir and Cézanne.

In these later men, the contributions of all previous painters are in large measure summed up and revised to make new forms. In Renoir, the Titian-Rubens-Fragonard tradition of loose line,



drawn with the aid of color, is further modified by the lighting and brushwork of the impressionists. Literalism is abandoned, and the drawing melts into a total form of which the keynote is grace and charm, combined with an essential grasp of the qualities of real things that avoids the flaccid romanticism of Watteau. In Cézanne, the tradition of Michel Angelo, Tintoretto and El Greco, who employed distortions to get strength, is passed through the channels of impressionism, and emerges with a new note of significance and reality, heightened by planes intersecting in perspective. In a still later painter, Glackens, we have a general style similar to Renoir's, modified by the psychological expressiveness of Daumier and Degas, but even more simplified and quite as revealing of character of subject by movement, gesture, etc.

In general, drawing by line is good art when it is free from confusing elements, like literal contour or overdecorative quality; when it is so condensed, so simplified that it carries in itself sufficient revelation of objective fact to enable us to grasp the essence, significance, conviction of objective reality in the things portrayed. In short, drawing by line consists not in the literal reproduction of contours or shapes; it is a mark of the artist's ability to resolve the lines of demarcation into separate parts, select certain parts for emphasis and recombine them into a new ensemble that is a form in itself, not merely a duplication of the shape of an object. Line gets power by what it does to what is contained between the lines; that is, as with all other forms, its essential characteristic resides in the relations it assumes and creates.

A man's drawing is as distinctive of himself, of his personality (his candor, reality, freedom from affectation) as is his face, his writing, or his psychological make-up as revealed by analysis. A line in isolation is rarely to be considered in a painting; it gets form from its relation to other lines; when used in connection with other lines it achieves plastic reality; its value in the hierarchy of art is determined by its significant use in connection with the other elements—color, light, mass, shadow—which make up drawing.

## CHAPTER V

### COMPOSITION

COMPOSITION, which in its general sense is the arrangement of masses, is capable of great variety. Its value is determined by the painter's ability to make the elements hang together in a unified whole. It is good in proportion as it embodies the painter's feeling for symmetry, order, balance, rhythm. It is in its highest estate when these characteristics have the individual flavor which we term "originality." It is the factor in a painting which is most abused by academic painters to achieve a surface imitation of aesthetic value. When the personal note which characterizes originality appears in a composition, it is usually condemned by critics and academic painters as bad art. There are no rules about composition restricting it to one or more rigid categories. The only rule is that which is applicable to everything else in life which we find interesting: it must show an order which satisfies our demand that things go well together.

There are, however, a number of general types of composition which are constantly met with and which require examination. The simplest form is that of a center mass with balancing figures to right and left by which bilateral symmetry is attained; this form is usually that of a pyramid. This illustrates the principle of order in an obvious form: the sense of stability, of rhythm is achieved. It is illustrated in most of Raphael's Madonnas, but with him its use is so stereotyped that it indicates a poverty of imagination which detracts from aesthetic richness. However, this form, although in itself trite, may be combined with other qualities, color, light, line, of such personal and distinctive character, as in the Castelfranco Giorgione, that the successful use of these plastic means discounts the banality of the composition.

The variation and enrichment of composition by which greater personal expressiveness is achieved begins when instead of a complete bilateral symmetry we have a mass different in kind but similar in function, which surprises and yet fulfills the normal desire for balance. In Titian's "The Supper at Emmaus," the number of figures on the left of the central figure is greater than



on the right, but there is in addition on the right a window opening out on a landscape, which adds to the interest of the design; thus, unity is not disturbed and variety is increased.

In the foregoing, it is their relation to a central mass that ties together the separate masses. The central figure is usually in these cases the one of greatest interest, so that there is an obvious parallel between plastic and narrative or human values of the several units. But the object that ties up the parts of a picture may be in itself trivial from the narrative point of view as, for example, the tree, executed in the Chinese manner, in Cosimo Rosselli's fresco in the Sistine Chapel, or the Cupid in Titian's "Jupiter and Antiope." A radically different type of composition is achieved when the central mass is discarded entirely, as in Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre," and in some of the Assisi Giotto's. In these pictures the elements are kept from falling apart by subtle relationships, by which the artist's feeling for grouping is expressed. This "feeling for grouping" means a feeling for harmonious relationships, and it is a factor in plastic art which may vary independently of the other factors: in Raphael, for example, it is much better than his color.

In a good painting all the factors are integrated, and composition is one of these factors. Paintings of the highest value are composed with color, so that the two factors, composition and color, are blended. In the "Concert Champêtre," the color-rhythms bind the picture together, along with the sequence of line and mass. In Titian's "Entombment," the color, rich, varied and deep, permeates the entire canvas and ties the units together. The colors in the cloaks of the bending figures, at the right and left of the central group, do the same thing for that group and function as a frame to enclose it. In Tintoretto's "Paradise," the rhythmic succession of color unites with the rhythm of line to give the effect of swirling movement which is the keynote of the picture's design. So also in Piero della Francesca and Giotto, and this heightened integration makes their pictures more personal and individual. Here, as always, the greater the fusion of means the more living, convincing, real, individual, is the effect, and the farther removed from mechanism or academicism.

Another constructive plastic element in composition is light. Here, as with color, the light represented in various parts of the canvas often forms a pattern in itself. A figure or object functions quite differently according to its place in the pattern of light, which

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is a distinguishable but inseparable part of the plastic form. The pattern of light in Titian's "Man with the Glove" is vital to the composition. The composition, in other words, is an essential part of the total design, and must be judged as subsidiary to it; and this is the reason for the futility of all academic rules for judging composition in isolation.

The lines which define the contours of objects have an important function in composition. In Poussin's "Les Aveugles de Jéricho" and in Courbet's "The Painter's Studio," the figures are held together not only by their placing with reference to a central point, but by lines carried over from one mass to another. The whole composition flows, it is never static. When abstracted the line is seen to form a pattern in itself which is made up of a series of subsidiary patterns all merged with one another. This interweaving of line in combination with a central figure is very important in all closely knit compositions. In Raphael's "Holy Family of Francis I" or Leonardo's "Virgin, St. Anne and the Infant Jesus" the figures, both as wholes and with reference to their parts, are focal points in a network of lines in three dimensions. The way in which linear patterns contrast with each other, reinforce each other, etc., may be infinitely varied according to the feeling of the painter for space-effects. In Uccello, this composition by line produces such a striking effect that it is the chief constructive element in the plastic form, which is clearly separable from and independent of the subject-matter. This again illustrates the necessity of judging all plastic elements in relation to design. Judged by academic standards, the Uccellos would be uncomposed, but with the design in mind the relation of the parts to one another at once becomes apparent. Uccello's form is of the abstract character one finds in a successfully realized cubist picture: that is, the design has little or nothing to do with representation of real objects.

In composition, the individual figures, as masses, do not always operate as units. A whole group may function as a unit, and in powerful compositions on a large scale they do so. In that case there is a subsidiary composition within the group, just as in a symphony we find several movements each one a composition in itself. For example, consider Francesco di Giorgio's "Rape of Europa," in which the group of trees and foliage functions as a mass, and the individual branches, leaves, etc., make up a subordinate pattern within that mass. Similarly in Rembrandt's



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“Unmerciful Servant,” the three figures at the right are a single mass balancing the single figure at the left; within that mass the individual elements are clearly distinguished and make up an interesting composition in themselves. This subordinate composition will in a great painting fit into and enhance the general design; in an inferior painting it may be good in itself, but it will fail to integrate with the total design. In the Botticelli “Moses Kills the Egyptian” (Analysis, page 394), there are two separate pictures which do not unify into a single composition; in Cosimo Rosselli’s “Pharaoh’s Destruction in the Red Sea,” a similar double theme does unify. (Analysis, page 409.) In Titian’s “Assumption” (Analysis, page 416), this integration of different groups is present in a very high degree, the rhythms of line and mass being reinforced by light, color, and space, all binding the picture together into a harmonious unity, with human values and plastic values perfectly merged. In Raphael’s “Transfiguration” (Analysis, page 398) this unity is much more superficial, is accomplished by more obvious means; yet the design is successful in both the Titian and the Raphael. These analyses indicate once again that the resolution of design into its elements and the study of the interaction of all the plastic means is the only method of approach to problems of plastic form.

Transition to space-composition may be made if we consider relation of figures and masses to background. So far, all that has been said of composition could be applied to perfectly flat painting, but in work of the greatest aesthetic power many features of composition depend upon representation of the third dimension. Even in flat painting, as in Cimabue or Matisse, and in Manet, not everything depicted is shown as on the same plane, and there is a suggestion of spatial depth. The relation of a single head, as in a portrait, to what is back of it, should be considered a part of the composition of the picture. This relation is partly determined by color, partly by compositional means in the narrower sense. The pattern of lines in a portrait may be carried into the background, or there may be superficially no relation, as in the Pisanello “Portrait of the Princess d’Este.” Here the design of trees and flowers which make up the background may seem plastically unrelated to the girl’s head; really, however, the relation is an organic one. In Fra Filippo Lippi’s “Virgin Adoring the Child,” the relation between the central figures and the background is exceedingly important, though the

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objects on the background are felt like the pattern on a screen. On the other hand the background may be extremely simple, as in Titian's "Man with the Glove" or Rembrandt's "Hendrickje Stoffels," in both of which, by means that are very subtle, the figure is distinguished, set out from what is back of it. The effect of an infinity of space back of the figure achieved in both these pictures represents the consummation of masterly background-painting. In Rubens's portrait "The Baron Henri de Vicq," though the placing of the head against the background is effective, the means employed, that is, sharply contrasting colors, are obvious and more facile, and the lesser economy of means reduces the aesthetic value in comparison with the Titian and the Rembrandt.

Space-composition is achieved largely through use of perspective and is at its best when color is the chief constructive factor. But skillful perspective is not the same thing as effective space-composition. The difference is that in effective space-composition not only is the effect of depth rendered, but the intervals, the relations of distance, are intrinsically pleasing and represent a personal feeling instead of mere literal imitation. The mere representation of distance has no closer relation to art than the work of the surveyor or civil engineer. Objects well composed in space are not huddled or crowded: each object is in its own space, each has elbow-room, no matter how small the space may be. Space is the element which establishes these relations between the objects, and they are an important source of aesthetic pleasure.

In architecture and sculpture, where space is actually present, there is the same distinction between a vital, personal arrangement of spaces which gives the *feeling* of depth or extensity, and the inability really to conceive the object in three-dimensional terms. Primitive negro art shows this power of conception in three dimensions, while in much of Greek sculpture we feel the comparative lack of it.

In composition in three dimensions, all the effects of two-dimensional composition are amplified. Thrust and counterthrust, balance, rhythm, the effects of light and shadow, are heightened in variety and power. The sense of real space, harmoniously subdivided, appears in Claude, in Poussin, in Perugino, in Raphael, in all the great Venetians. In regard to space alone is Raphael in the class of the greatest masters. He and Perugino were doubtless influenced to achieve it by the natural landscape of Central Italy, in which effective space-composition is strikingly apparent.



In Poussin's "Funeral of Phocion" we have not only a clear indication of distance everywhere, but great beauty in the intervals themselves. The masses are related backward and forward and form a design which is an integral part of the general design made up of the other plastic elements. This design in space is reinforced by color both in its appealing quality and the relations of the colors to each other, and by line and light and shade; all these elements combine to give a distinctively clear, light, airy and charming design. In Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre," the relation of all parts of the landscape to the blue and gold distance contributes greatly to the impression of mystery, romance, and glamour. In Claude, the effects are more romantic, more majestic, and they would be impossible but for the unlimited spaciousness of his pictures, which gives reality to the vast designs of light. In addition, the ways in which the intervals are proportioned and related to one another are also immediately pleasing in themselves. A final example of space-composition is Giotto's: his perspective, from the academic standpoint, is very faulty, but he had the utmost genius for placing objects, in deep space, in relations which are varied, powerful, absolutely unstereotyped, but always appropriate and in harmony with the general design.

Space-composition shares with the other plastic means the possibility of becoming academic, usually through overaccentuation. An example of this is found in Perugino's Sistine fresco, in which the grouping of the figures and lines on the pavement are placed to get an effect of great roominess, and this too-obvious quality results in cheapness. In Turner's "Dido Building Carthage," there is the same overdramatization of space, but in this case the theft from Claude is so obvious that the picture is plagiaristic rather than academic.

BOOK III  
THE TRADITIONS OF PAINTING





## CHAPTER I

### THE DAWN OF MODERN PAINTING

IN order to show the general nature of the traditions which have played an important part in the development of painting, and how they are utilized and modified by individuals, it is necessary to consider briefly the historical aspects. Old traditions constantly emerge in even the most recent painting, as, for example, Tintoretto in Soutine, the Persian miniatures in Matisse. One can judge of the individuality and importance of a painter only by referring to the sources of his effects, and by observing how these effects are combined with those from other sources. If the artist is a real creator these effects pass through the crucible of his own personality and emerge as new forms. If they are seen to be destitute of organic relationships, the painter is a mere imitator, as in the case of academicians like Paxton or Redfield, or of an eclectic like Derain.

Modern painting developed out of mosaics. These are substantially in a single plane, that is, flat, and really amount to little more than colored patterns, with an illustrative appeal. Although many mosaics are positive creations of definite art value, their subject-matter is usually stereotyped or unreal, with little or no sign of personal expression. Convention was the rule and individual expression the exception. The aesthetic effects spring from color and line composed harmoniously into what is really decoration. The absence of light, modeling and perspective, and the use of a rigid line resulted in figures stiff and not individualized and in highly formal compositions, with very simple rhythms.

Departure from this flat decorative pattern began with the gradual introduction of perspective, illumination and modeling, and their application to more realistic subject-matter, so that painting became more expressive, in the sense defined on pages 30 and 39. This increasing expressiveness through command of a greater number of plastic means, and increased personal feeling in the painter, will be traced in the course of the discussion.



**Cimabue** (c. 1240–c. 1301) took the first step in the transition to modern painting by so modifying the Byzantine mosaic tradition as to engraft upon it an individual expression. His painting is still in the main flat, but the beginning of sculptural form is observable, though it amounts to little more than a suggestion. In his picture in the church at Assisi, and in a similar one in the Uffizi, there is the same Byzantine composition—a central figure and exact bilateral symmetry achieved by an equal number of figures on each side, with lines in each exactly balancing those in the corresponding figure on the opposite side. The contours are very sharp, that is, the drawing is purely linear, and the color is obviously laid on, with neither the Venetian structural use nor the merging shown in Giotto. The color is dark but pervasive, and there is effective color-harmony, partly due to the above-noted exact bilateral symmetry. The figures are static, without animation, and the expression of the faces is uniformly doleful and almost bovine, without individual variation. There is slight indication of perspective and the planes are few and close together. The stereotyped expression, the sharp line and the superficial color, with lack of realism in the figures and buildings, give the whole a painted rather than a real effect. The composition is beautifully balanced but it too remains inert. The design is good and the light and modeling are used well though in slight degree. There is skill in the employment of the traditional formulas, and the religious character of the subject-matter, in keeping with the spirit of the time and free from sentimentality, yields an austere, effective form which must be judged, in view of the state of plastic art at the time, as of considerable aesthetic importance. The design consists of a dignified rhythm both in the figures and in the component parts of the figures and objects. The Byzantine form is beginning to take on the qualities of life, but it is still quite formal and comparatively unreal and otherworldly.

**Giotto** (1276–1336), perhaps the greatest painter of all time, whether he be judged by what he contributed technically or by the beauty of his creations, made the next step in the development, and it was an enormous one. The transition from Cimabue is illustrated strikingly in the Uffizi, where a Cimabue and a Giotto, in which the composition is essentially the same, hang in the same room.

In the Giotto, the Byzantine tradition is shown in the formal pat-

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tern and the bilateral symmetry of composition. Its aesthetic value is increased by the intensification, amplification, and enrichment of color, which is jewel-like in quality and less obviously laid on. The color-harmony is pervasive and aids in unifying the picture. The light is used not only to heighten color, but to form with shadows a subsidiary pattern, as in the deepening of the folds of the gown. The sensitiveness, expressiveness and rhythmic quality of Giotto's line is not compromised by its comparative rigidity which has little of the fluidity that later appeared in the Venetians. The tactile values are increased, and in spite of the static character of the picture it is much more realistic than the work of Cimabue. The decorative quality and rhythms are increased by the naturalistic duplication of textural effects, which also make possible special notes of color-harmonies. The ensemble effect is rich and extremely convincing: its reality is incomparably greater than that of the work of any other man up to that period. There is also a new contribution in the expression of the faces, in which the set dolefulness of Cimabue is replaced by a tendency towards beatification, which was later taken over by other artists. The use of perspective, though still relatively slight, is increasing; there are more planes and also a suggestion of space-composition, though in this respect the gold halos remain as an adventitious aid. Although the spirit of the times is still in evidence, there is a decided advance toward naturalistic painting. Even though the technical means employed are still comparatively primitive, the development of these means by later artists is wonderfully forecasted.

Giotto's special qualities are best shown in the frescoes at Assisi and at Padua, and these are of such epic character that they are analyzed with considerable detail in the Appendix. The style in the earlier set at Assisi is quite different from that in the later ones at Padua, and they will be discussed separately, after which the essential Giotto note common to both will be pointed out.

It will suffice here to state only those characteristics which have a bearing upon the relation between plastic means and the human values resulting from their effective use in rendering subject-matter. Giotto is always direct and simple both in what he does with the plastic means and in the story he tells—they dovetail, go hand in hand, balance. We feel the rightness of everything. His originality is astounding, it seems never to be



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exhausted. This is seen at Assisi in the unusual methods of composition of separate objects, and at Padua in the variety of effects attained by means in themselves essentially the same. The result is an overpowering wealth of relationships of forms to one another. He abstracts the essence of real things and shows them to us by legitimate plastic means—a fine example of the rendering of human values in painting without regard for subject-matter. In appreciating Giotto, we may ignore the story, yet when we look for the story it is there, and told simply and directly. It is dramatic in the best sense of the word, that is, it is vivid, real, moving. He renders deep universal human values by means of line, mass, pose, movement, planes, color of the highest quality, and marvelous use of light as illumination and pattern. As a draughtsman he had few equals: his line is tersely expressive of an infinite variety of unmistakable meanings. Not, as in Botticelli, so decorative that we see chiefly the line; nor as in Ingres, forming a pattern or arabesque; nor psychologically saturated as in Degas—Giotto's line is *all* these and all in solution. His color is as moving aesthetically as it is in the Venetians and it moves us by the way it works in and around line, mass, space, to weave them into things distinct in themselves—a series of rhythmic designs that fuse into a plastic form of overwhelming aesthetic power. What Giotto means to us depends upon what we bring to his paintings in background and temperament. The stories he depicts are irrelevant. By sheer mastery of plastic means, he compels us to enter that union with the world which is the basis of religion, whether Pagan or Christian. Giotto was perhaps the greatest of all artists because he had that power in the highest degree.

Those critics who laud the Padua frescoes at the expense of the earlier ones at Assisi, mistake the technical shadow for the aesthetic substance. What happened is, probably, that age brought to Giotto that loss of daring which often changes own-seeing and own-acting radicals generally into conservatives and formalists. His early Assisi frescoes represent a gifted, radical use of means of his own invention. As he grew older, his composition became more formal, and his highly individual effects, such as the pervasive color-light atmosphere, and the daring use of architectural units as main masses, came to be less in evidence. It is true that the Padua works are richer in the number and quality of forms made by the relations between the objects





Margaritone (Byzantine Style)

National Gallery





Cimabue

Uffizi





Florentine—Fourteenth Century

Barnes Foundation





Andrea del Castagno (School)

Florence

Showing the swirl used by subsequent painters, including Tintoretto, El Greco, Rubens, Fragonard, Delacroix, Renoir, Pascin, etc.

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employed, as one would expect with time and increased technical skill. But at Assisi there is a succession of massive aesthetic onslaughts that at first overwhelm, and then leave us astounded and delighted. The Padua ones charm by suavity of effects, rich, varied, and gentle, but they lack the Assisi monumental knockout power.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FLORENTINE TRADITION

GIOTTO marks the beginning of the Florentine tradition. Its debt to him is enormous, for practically all the Renaissance methods find their origin in his work. Perspective opened up a world of values possible only by the utilization of deep space; modeling added the three-dimensional qualities to figures and endowed them with reality; atmosphere and color gave an added naturalistic quality to objects and situations which hitherto had been at the best merely symbolic. These elements—perspective, space-composition, modeling, atmosphere and a new use of color—were each made the subject of special experimentation by later artists and yielded the brilliant results which we find in the high Renaissance. The artists each of whom added something definitely constructive to the ultimate results, were Masaccio, Leonardo, Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, Michel Angelo and Piero della Francesca. Although the last-named was not a Florentine he, like Raphael and other great men from all parts of Italy, had absorbed the developments that came from Florence and made them a part of a tradition which became universal. We can best appreciate the fundamental greatness of that tradition if we note briefly the individual contributions of the various important Florentines. We shall see that practically all of the plastic means were enriched and that the traditions of modern and contemporary painting are in considerable measure modified versions of the contributions made by the early Florentines. We shall see the absurdity of Berenson's statement that their chief contribution was effective figure painting which, he claims, owes its aesthetic significance to the rendering of "tactile values," an entirely subsidiary detail in plastic form.

**Masaccio** (1401-1428), as the most important follower of Giotto, may be considered first. We are struck immediately by the increasing naturalism or realism in his work. His figures look more like actual people, less otherworldly than Giotto's. His line is less clean-cut than Giotto's, so that contours are blurred

rather than sharp, and his drawing gives the feeling of natural movement. His line is clearly the origin of that of later great draughtsmen, such as Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier, Glackens, Pascin. It is realistic in the best sense, that is, imaginatively realistic, unburdened by literal representation. It catches the essence of a thing and expresses it tersely. Consequently, dramatic expression is rendered in good plastic terms; we see the drama, the intentness, as a reality, and feel its significance with no alloy of speciousness. That is true of Giotto also, but the means employed are different; in Masaccio the effects tend more towards the naturalism which increases as we recede from medieval painting. Perspective, which is vague or but lightly indicated in Giotto, becomes precise in Masaccio. Deep space, with its great possibilities of new effects and new values, becomes an added resource. Linear perspective, as such, is rarely a plastic element of much power; color must be added to give both space and perspective their greatest plastic significance. Masaccio used linear perspective with an emphasis that tended toward the literal representation of distance, but he used it with color in such a way that there is the effect not only of aërial perspective but of an atmospheric haze pervading the whole painting. His somber color makes an atmosphere more evident than the Venetian glow, though it is rather a murky veil than a suffusion of color. It suggests Rembrandt, but is made up of color modified by light, rather than the definite contrasts of light and shadow which constitute *chiaroscuro*. It is certain that in both Rembrandt and Masaccio there is a glamour, a mystery, and a feeling of austere dignity, due probably to a similar use of color, light and shadow. Occasionally, as in the small figure at the left in "St. Peter Healing the Sick," Masaccio resorts to *chiaroscuro* as positive as that of Rembrandt and with results quite as satisfactory. It is possible that Rembrandt had noted Masaccio's methods and was influenced by them. The atmospheric veil perceptible in Masaccio is clearly the precursor of the colored atmosphere so often found in later painters, notably Claude, and which the impressionists made one of the principal factors in their technique. Objects located in the middle distance, and still more those in the background, are blurred in comparison with the relative clarity of those in the foreground. This rendering of the effects of distance as we have them in actual life again recalls the work of the impressionists, and again illustrates Masaccio's realistic tendency.



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His advance toward modern painting is shown by the greater use he made of light both in modeling and in the formation of a definite pattern. The solidity of figures achieved by his modeling by means of light represents an advance over Giotto, and his accentuation of light is greater; both of these are steps toward greater realism as conceived by naturalistic painters. In short, Masaccio represented a positive advance over Giotto in the use of all the plastic means—line, color, perspective, space—toward a new plastic form of individuality and power. (See Appendix for detailed analysis of his plastic form.)

In painting up to the time of Uccello (1397–1475), subject-matter had played an important rôle, but, as we have seen, a painter's importance is to be judged by his ability to fuse subject-matter with the plastic means. It has been emphasized repeatedly that aesthetic experience is purest when we disregard all associated ideas suggested by the subject-matter and confine our attention to the plastic form in which the story is embodied. Uccello proves the truth of that statement, for if we condemn him because of the quaint, the naïve or the grotesque, represented in his subject-matter, we miss entirely the artistic significance of his work. His obviously accentuated perspective has misled critics to patronize him as an inferior artist obsessed by perspective. The single protest against this misunderstanding is made by Roger Fry in his book *Vision and Design*. Our own notes, which were made before the publication of Mr. Fry's essay, confirm his observations that Uccello is one of the great creators of the early Renaissance. We take exception, however, to Mr. Fry's intimation that Uccello's unique plastic form is a by-product of his preoccupation with perspective instead of, as we believe, a clearly felt purpose achieved by the intelligent and skillful use of all the plastic means, including perspective. His use of perspective is never such that he attempts to apply it to all the objects depicted. Instead, he deliberately selected certain objects and to only certain phases of them applied rigidly the laws of perspective. We see that same general principle used by Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso in dealing not only with perspective, but with other plastic means, when literal representation of objects or situations is far from their intentions. An artist is great in proportion as he has the ability to select and modify phases or characteristics of real things and so to rearrange them as to create a new form, a thing in itself, radically

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different from its original in nature. This was what Matisse meant when he said to a critic, who had remarked that he never saw a woman like the one Matisse had painted, "But it is not a woman—it is a painting." So with Uccello, his subject-matter is not like anything we have ever seen in the real world. In his "The Rout of San Romano," the horses have the appearance of rocking-horses cavorting with exaggerated movements, and all the figures have a rigidity quite nonhuman. The lack of realism is heightened by a tendency in the background to recede not naturally but suddenly toward the top of the picture. This handling of background was taken over by the great men of the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, Pissarro, who increased the power of their design by abolishing the more or less literal representation of distance which had been current in most of the painters up to that time. In short, we can say that Uccello used perspective deliberately to establish a new and more moving relation of things to each other; in other words, to achieve a design, a plastic form, of his own creation. His success in that respect entitles him to a very high place among painters even of the great era in which he lived. If we disregard the narrative in his battle-scenes in which nobody is fighting, and look at the lines of the stiff figures, spears and staffs, of the placing of the objects in deep space, we find an interplay between the colored rectangular planes and the rounded contours of unrealistic objects, which establish a series of relationships of such rich aesthetic reward that we never think of the subject-matter. The exaggerated, unrealistic dramatic movement is merely a novel and highly successful means of forming a design the elements of which, line, color, space and mass, function plastically. Uccello's form is primarily that of bizarreness, and like all aesthetic forms it is to be judged as a thing in itself, purely by its effect aesthetically. Critics who treat Uccello as simply an experimenter in perspective paving the way for later artists who used perspective more realistically, show an utter confusion of the history of technique with plastic criticism.

Another Florentine whose importance has been inadequately recognized is **Andrea del Castagno** (1410?–1457). His distinction is due not so much to skillful use of the plastic means of his predecessors, as to his ability to endow these means with a new note of power and strength in design. One of his chief technical devices



is a swirling unit of well-integrated line, light and color which later men, Rubens, El Greco, Fragonard, Renoir, Pascin and others, employed as an element in their individual techniques. In the house at Florence which is reserved for his work, we see a whole series of frescoes which proclaim his distinction and strength. There also, we find a fresco, said to be by one of his unknown followers, which is so rich in the successful use of plastic means in the style of the master, that a detailed analysis of it is given in the Appendix. His "Pietà" produces an impression of moving aesthetic power akin to that of Michel Angelo, but it is executed with much simpler means and without obvious muscular accentuations. We feel its reality, its power and charm, and recognize their source in a wonderful series of relationships between masses and spaces which are interlaced by the dignified, balanced, simplified use of line, light and color. In contrast to this simplicity, "The Last Supper" gives the same effect of strength and power through the medium of an infinite series of forms of much greater complexity. It would be difficult to find, aside from El Greco's, a painting composed of greater variety of intricate patterns formed by the harmonious relation of line, light, color and space. There is a complex and moving pattern in each of the figures, in all parts of the figures, hands, heads, etc., in the table and all its parts, in the wall, in the textiles, chairs and floor. We can trace separate patterns in light, line, space, color and we feel the rhythm, the throb, as these separate patterns flow and fuse into each other and into the total plastic design. This astounding richness of forms is pervaded by deep and rather dark colors, which enhance the effect of abstract dignity, solemnity, austerity and power.

**Fra Filippo Lippi** (1406?-1469), is not generally considered to be among the monumental figures of early Florentine painting, but it seems to us that he has a form which is uniquely his own and which, in certain respects, allies him to modern and contemporary painting. He has neither the rich imaginative power of Giotto, the strength of Andrea del Castagno, nor the realism of Masaccio. When compared with the work of these or even lesser men, Lippi's conceptions are usually stereotyped and lacking in personal distinction. Yet his effects are often charming and, in at least two of his paintings, quite individual and significant from the standpoint of modern design. His ability to place a figure or a group of figures against an elaborate background and

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obtain a particular effect, is almost unique among the early painters. His *forte* lay in making a foreground and a background of apparently disparate qualities, and yet linking them into an organic whole so subtly that only one experienced in observing modern painting will recognize the essential unity of the picture. The point is illustrated by his "Virgin Adoring the Child" (page 162) in the Uffizi. Nearly all of the center of the foreground is occupied by good-sized figures of the Virgin and Child, in color which is very brilliant but delicate, and laid on, that is, not used structurally as a part of the figure. The line of the two figures is superbly realized, is rhythmically varied and reinforced in its fluid power by the delicacy of color which harmonizes well with the rhythmic line. The background is developed chiefly by accentuation of perspective, with equal distinctness of the outlines of both near and remote objects, which latter rise toward the top of the canvas. The effect of this background is rather that of a screen than of a representation of realistic perspective, and that effect is increased and made very complex by the great number of objects represented. The color of the background is in general effect dark—greens, browns, deep yellows with only an occasional slight and scattered note of brightness. This screen-like background, loaded with various objects, painted in realistic detail, is crystal-clear, and free from any suggestion of the atmosphere or glow which is so often used to unite foreground and background. It is, therefore, a multiplicity of planes packed close together and not separated as we should find them in a distance obviously considerable, if interpreted by the symbols of literal perspective. The plastic problem faced was to unite a simple foreground made up of a large central mass in brilliant and delicate colors with a complex background, rather dull and somber in color, containing a large number of objects all treated realistically except from the standpoint of perspective. In looking at the painting as a whole, we see a bright, large-sized figure, against a dark background containing many objects too large for their supposed distance from the eye, and out of place in perspective. That is, we see the foreground as a picture and the background as a second picture, which seem unrelated to each other. If we attempt to judge the painting either by realistic standards or by the plastic form of any previous painter, we are likely to say that it is composed of two disparate elements that cannot be unified. But if we reject these standards and look at the painting as some-



thing in itself, to be resolved into its plastic elements, we realize that the painting represents a new form of contrast. We see the foreground and background neither as such nor as figures, objects, or anything realistic. We note that the mass which the figures constitute is loaded with values of color and light, of silver, pink and blue, and of fluid, rhythmic line; that is, we perceive it as a rhythm. The background functions as a number of colored planes, highly complex, which move in space, in and around each other and effect a series of rhythmic relationships. We see in the new form made up of both foreground and background, a unity of rhythms in which all the elements, color, line, space, participate. If we may use a seemingly paradoxical expression, the painting is a unity of disparate, contrasting rhythms which are especially interesting because of the artist's fine feeling for relations between colors of non-naturalistic or exotic character. We may note similar effects in the impressionists, and to a larger degree in the work of Matisse and other contemporary painters.

In contrast to the foregoing Florentines, whose skillful use of legitimate plastic means entitles them to be classed as creators, let us consider briefly the work of another Florentine, **Fra Angelico** (1387-1455), whom the public, as well as most critics, consider a great master. Viewed from the standpoint of art there is little in Fra Angelico's work to arrest the attention. He was really an eclectic who represented a regression from the men who lived up to high standards, from whom he took the plastic ideas which he never succeeded in merging into a powerful and distinctive form. His line is that of his master Lorenzo Monaco, from whom he took also much of his pattern and considerable of his color. It is true that Fra Angelico made that color more pleasing sensuously, but he rarely succeeded in making color function organically in a painting. Color remained a series of staccato ejaculations. These often reinforce linear representation and sometimes make pleasing patterns. But the latter remain things apart which serve no purpose in promoting or effecting plastic unity. In the exceptions where his composition is satisfactory from the standpoint of ordered arrangement of objects, there is little or no evidence of originality. His use of perspective is either perfunctory or an overaccentuation of the manner of Masaccio or Uccello, and the effect is unconvincing aesthetically. The spacing is fairly good but the figures function compositionally only as elements in

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groups; individually they have little bearing upon the general design. His use of light is successful in attaining a modeling which is specious rather than convincing, and there is but little distinction in the pattern formed by light. His plastic shortcomings are made more evident by the nature of his subject-matter, the appeal of which is narrative or sentimental. Fra Angelico is a good example of how technical skill can be combined with lack of the ability to use it to produce a distinctive plastic form. His popularity is due to the illustration of themes of deep religious feeling, and not to his power to convey them in good plastic terms. His drama is literary, not plastic, and it seems, therefore, unreal. While we see an abundance of detail, we see that it is mere expressive detail, treated diffusely and largely by means of line which approaches literal reproduction of the actual manifestations of such sentiments as fear, humility, piety, abnegation, suffering. All this substitution of literary values for plastic equivalents is unconvincing; we feel it as affectation, sentimentality, unreality. The expression is out of all proportion to the plastic means employed, so that while skillful as illustration, it is superficial as art of the pretensions it assumes. In general, the best we can say of the vast majority of his paintings is that they offer a pattern of harmonious colors which serves as a setting for a sentimental story told in terms that are literary rather than plastic. Occasionally, as in the "Crucifixion" (Analysis, page 385) and the "Transfiguration" from the "Life of Jesus," Fra Angelico attains distinction by the legitimate use of plastic means.

**Piero della Francesca** (1416?-1492), while of Umbrian birth, may be regarded as Florentine, because he develops largely from Giotto and is free from the eclecticism that characterizes the Umbrians in general.

Piero is of interest primarily for his design, both in his pictures as wholes, and in their parts. His subject-matter has comparatively little of the intense religious elevation of Giotto, or of the dramatic intensity of Andrea del Castagno. His attitude towards it is one of cool detachment, and the effect is one of composure and dignity. These results he obtains by the skilled use of plastic means, of which the most important and characteristic is color. The basis of his color-scheme is a cool blue, which pervades everything, and is so effectively, though subtly, varied with light and related to other colors, that its variety seems infinite. This blue



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is probably the single note that is uniquely, inimitably his own, and it produces powerful varied aesthetic effects both by itself and by its relations to other elements of his design. The quality of the blue is tremendously moving; wherever he puts it, it animates the picture; it is not a mere sensuous note, but a positive form. He uses it frequently in association with a series of whites that have the quality of rich old ivory and form surfaces of marvelous charm. In comparison with this blue, his other colors, such as red and brown, approach the conventional; but into objects whose color, for example, green or purple, has a general feeling-tone akin to that of blue, he infuses a unique vitality that functions actively in reinforcing other dynamic plastic relations. This blue is so infinitely varied by light, and particularly used in relation to space, that it is really many kinds of blue, yet upon analysis the general feeling-tone enables one to recognize it as basically the same blue, infinitely varied.

This achievement of an exceedingly rich color-effect by means of the greatest simplicity—the way he makes that color function sometimes as a mass, sometimes as the element that gives space its distinctive character, and sometimes as the means of unifying compositional elements—this shows Piero's rank as an artist. His blues accomplish something comparable with Rembrandt's achievement in chiaroscuro. The color is not juicy, as with Rubens; not jewel-like, varied and yet blended into a suffusion so subtle as to escape any one but a connoisseur, as with Giotto. But it is extraordinarily adapted to his design, and establishes a distinctive form, in which it functions through harmonies and contrasts, and also aids in modeling, composition and movement. It is not of the airy Eighteenth Century French quality, but while it carries weight it is not heavy; it is just real, convincing, quietly powerful.

His composition, like Giotto's, is on a large scale, and shows great power of making unified design in spite of disregard of academic rules. His masses are often distributed in unorthodox fashion, but are always effectively welded into a single composition. Like the greatest masters, he accomplishes this welding by the aid of all the plastic means—light, line, and especially color. Often a spot of light functions as a mass, as in the "Exaltation of the Cross," where it is combined with blue in a pattern of clouds. His space-composition is not as striking as that of Perugino and Raphael; but every plane is clear-cut and distinguished from every other plane, and no matter what the complexity of the

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work the number of planes is never increased to the point of confusion. Even in battle scenes, while there is a complex, striking design, there is no confusion. As an aesthetic effect, Piero's space-composition is in many ways better than either Perugino's or Raphael's because it does not jump out as accentuation, but is merged with the other plastic means; it is more varied, and color adds quite a particular charm to the spatial intervals. His command over light as an element of design is especially noticeable; he uses it both to make a pattern in itself and to aid in modeling. All the objects in his pictures swim in a lovely quiet light, enriched and varied with color. His lighting of figures is never obtrusive; even when he accentuates it, he obtains a quality of color in gowns, etc., which is so effectively heightened by the light pattern that we get an impression not of overemphasis but of more powerful reality. He models with light and color so subtly that it is often difficult to see how the three-dimensional character is attained. The faces often seem to be cast in one piece in which light and shadow and color are scarcely distinguishable; but of their solid, three-dimensional character, there can be no doubt.

Piero's drawing is such that it gives the effect of rigidity to the arms, heads, etc., which is not felt as a drawback, but as a charm, and indeed a strong contributing factor to the idea of graceful naïveté; it makes a design appealing in itself regardless of subject-matter. In this he owes nothing to the Greeks, whose line was more fluid, and tended towards sweetness even in the great period. The ensemble of these effects gives a design of great distinction, of which the keynote is coolness, detachment, power. Subject-matter is rendered in good plastic terms free from literary values. Although he simplified and discarded photographic detail, and although he was not a realist, he succeeded extremely well in giving the essence of things by means properly plastic. One must be familiar with Piero's work to appreciate Cézanne, Renoir and Prendergast.

With Botticelli, Leonardo, Raphael, Mantegna and Michel Angelo, the influence of antique Greek and Roman sculpture becomes the dominant one in Renaissance painting. The flowing line of Greek sculpture was so much the vogue that nearly all the painters used it as the basis of their individual expression. It was Botticelli's chief source in achieving magnificent decorations. Leonardo used it, accompanied by the rather cloying sweetness



characteristic of late Greek sculpture, and went even further toward the sculptural effects of the ancient Greeks in his preoccupation with modeling. In Michel Angelo, the conception is almost more sculptural than pictorial.

**Botticelli's** (1444-1510) line is extremely expressive and rhythmic, but it lacks the reinforcement by the other plastic elements necessary in painting of real importance. His color, which is almost uniformly either dull or garish, offers only the superficial pleasingness of feeble color-combinations. It has no structural value as it has in the Venetians, and no organic or functional power as it has in Giotto or Piero della Francesca. His compositions are usually conventional and lack both originality and conviction. In his "Moses Kills the Egyptian," the composition falls apart; in his "Birth of Venus," the composition aims at simplicity but achieves incongruity by over-decoration of the few component structural elements. By the skilled use of light, of space, and graceful fluid line, he sometimes secures a design of considerable beauty, but it is much more a pattern than a design made up of varied plastic units. As an artist he is mediocre because his means are limited. He was a master of line, but he had no fine discrimination in using it; for example, in his big religious pictures, his swirling line gives a feeling of virtuosity instead of the richer values accessible through a command over all the plastic means. His line builds a series of arabesques of much charm in their rhythmic movements; but that is pure decoration because it is an accentuation of a detail which stands out in isolation instead of being merged with the other plastic elements into a design which functions as a whole. A comparison of his "Spring" with Francesco di Giorgio's "Rape of Europa" reveals the difference between rhythmic line reinforcing other elements, and the same line in Botticelli exaggerated to the point of obscuring them. As with Leonardo and Raphael, much of the popular appeal of Botticelli rests upon illustration rather than plastic value.

**Leonardo** (1452-1519) is one of the great outstanding figures in art, but his popularity is due chiefly to factors that have little to do with art. He was a scientist more than an artist, and while his researches produced results that have had an enormous influence on painting since his time, those results tended toward the aca-

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demic as much as toward real creation. Most of what is bad in Raphael is due to the influence of Leonardo, and what was positively constructive in Leonardo's contributions was soon academicized by his followers into a formula which has served as a counterfeit of art for several centuries. Leonardo himself derived from the Greeks and from Verrocchio, but what he absorbed was reworked by his own powerful mind into a new and definite form. His positive contribution was a manipulation of line and light into a modeling of figures whose three-dimensional qualities are of convincing reality. In this, however, the central idea came from the Venetian, Giovanni Bellini. Leonardo's craftsmanship was so defective that he rarely seems to be able to control his medium. In his Uffizi "Annunciation," the actual painting has the quality of ordinary fence-painting. His real status as an artist is revealed best by a comparison of his sketch "The Adoration of the Magi," with almost any of his finished paintings. The sketch reveals his fine sense of composition and his great command over space, light and line. It is merely a skeleton, but it is so rich in elements harmoniously combined into a strong plastic unity that it has greater aesthetic value than the majority of his finished paintings. In it we see what Leonardo could do in constructing design, and we are able to judge how much he lost from his design by his frequent failure to apply paint skillfully, and by his overemphasis of light in modeling and in the general design. Although his color is sometimes moving, as it is to a certain extent in "Mona Lisa," it is usually indifferent, so that the shadows are dull and the paint almost muddy. This defect is apparent in some measure in what is perhaps his best finished painting, "Bacchus," and even in the above-mentioned sketch there is a suggestion of muddiness about the shadows. His line, though vigorous, is constantly overaccentuated, as in the "St. John the Baptist," and so is his light. It is the overaccentuation of light that produces the melodramatic tinge so constantly present in his work, which is to be seen in both the London and the Paris versions of "La Vierge aux Rochers." He was rarely able to make light function economically and subtly and as a real equivalent for color, as did Rembrandt. When he uses light and color together, the light seems to be laid on and does little or nothing to animate, enrich, and heighten the color-effects, as it does in Rembrandt, Giorgione, and the other great colorists.

Leonardo's chief claim to be considered an artist was his ability



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to conceive design, but he was rarely able to carry out the design to form a finished picture of balanced plastic values. To give expressiveness, he abstracted line and light from their legitimate place in the ensemble of plastic means and debased them to portrayal of the adventitious literary, narrative, or sentimental aspects of subject-matter. There are rarely to be found in his work plastic equivalents for the human values of subject-matter, as we find them in Giotto, Titian, Tintoretto or Rembrandt. We find instead preoccupation with solidity of figures, indifferent color, rather tight line, a tendency to overlighting, and these elements so used throw into relief subject-matter in which excessive sweetness of expression is almost the constant feature. Walter Pater's essay on "Mona Lisa" is an unwittingly fine exposition of how well an artist can be revealed in his true essence by brilliant writing that never comes within sight of the plastic qualities of his work.

**Michel Angelo** (1475-1564). A spectator need be sensitive only to the effects encountered in the everyday world to be literally overwhelmed with a feeling of power when he enters the Sistine Chapel and directs even a first glance at the altar or ceiling. There can be no doubt of that feeling nor of the fact that it is caused by the Michel Angelo frescoes. We know that an abstract feeling can be communicated by a work of art, and we can reasonably infer that the aesthetic feeling in general is in a large measure tinged with something pervasive that is essentially abstract. Certain it is that the form of Michel Angelo is primarily that of power. In our search for the causes we find that the feeling of power is conveyed with simplicity and directness, and supported by an exceedingly strong feeling for design. As we proceed with an analysis of the means, we note modeling with light and shadow, and accentuation of muscular contours in the figures. We see that the sources of his inspiration were Greek sculpture, and also the paintings of Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio, Signorelli and Cosimo Tura; but these influences are incorporated in a form which is Michel Angelo's own creation.

He is an example of how a comparatively limited repertoire of technical means can be free from overemphasis and merged into a total plastic form of the highest grade. The means in his case are light and shadow, welded into three-dimensional solidity which is the main factor in his rhythmic and effective designs;

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both in individual figures and in the composition as a whole. Subsidiary to this is another design made by the muscular accentuations, which unifies with the main design and contributes to its strength. This design is so varied in the series of frescoes in the Sistine Chapel that there is no suggestion of monotony. In consequence, his limited means are analogous in results to the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt, as a simple source of indefinitely varied effects. Michel Angelo's color-scheme is chiefly founded on a dark blue; but within the limits of this color the variation is sufficient to make the pervasive color an adjunct to the masses in composition, although it is not used structurally as in the Venetians.

His line is extremely vigorous and terse, and is so broken up and related to other lines that it has a positive decorative quality which usually fuses with the structural value of the line and enhances the total aesthetic effect. At times there is lack of perfect fusion and the resulting overdecorative effect detracts from the strength of the plastic unit. Like Raphael, Michel Angelo is a great illustrator, but in spite of the dramatic themes of his frescoes, we are rarely conscious, as with Raphael, of a disbalanced melodrama. In his "Last Judgment," all is done with force and dignity, and the story and the plastic means are well coördinated. This results in the realization of a powerful design of three-dimensional forms, moving in rhythmically ordered space, in which color pervades and reinforces the power. The dramatic movement is thus attained without the stridency seen often in Rubens and usually in Delacroix. Power is the keynote, it is the foundation stone upon which rests the intensity, the exaltation, the terror, that give to these frescoes their unique moving force.

In spite of all of Michel Angelo's greatness we are conscious of a feeling that his rank as an artist is lower than that of Giotto and the great Venetians. We feel that there is a deliberate striving for effects not strictly within the limits of painting, which partake of the nature of illustration. It is certainly true that his imagination was sculptural and the range of his means in painting was quite restricted when compared with that of other great painters. He had also a gift for writing poetry which has the intensity and exaltation that pervade the Sistine frescoes. It seems that one detects even in his great frescoes the claims of the sculptor and of the literary poet in conflict with the proper



function of the painter. At any rate, his paintings do not realize the scope of effects possible in painting as do those of Giotto, Giorgione, Rembrandt, Velasquez, or Renoir. He was indeed a great artist and no other painter so fully conveys the idea of abstract power. The criticism that seems justified is that the results he produced were alloyed with effects from other means than those legitimate to painting.

Raphael (1483-1520) had wide knowledge of what other painters had contributed to art, an extraordinary facility and ability to use paint, a fine sense of composition, an unsurpassed feeling for space-composition, and he was in active contact with a rich and vital civilization. But his work, judged by what it contains of plastic value, reveals the perfect example of a first-rate virtuoso who was far from being a first-rate artist. His superlative skill and knowledge enabled him to obtain striking effects, but he was in reality an eclectic, even though his works have a characteristic Raphael quality. The origin of what he has to say is always discoverable, and his borrowings are not fully modified into a creation of his own. The more one studies Raphael, the less he seems original, and the more his dapperness, grace, charm and skill are seen to be superficial and indicative of unreality.

His command of plastic means was very unequal. His good sense of arrangement and his fine feeling for the ordered sequence of objects on the same planes and in deep space are left without adequate support. His color is almost uniformly thin, dry and drab, even when bright; it is nearly always without structural quality, and without unifying effect on the composition. His lack of feeling for color makes his light seem unreal, because when light falls upon color it not only fails to animate it but heightens the effect of its thinness, dryness and superficiality. This defect was Leonardo's also, and Raphael took it over in its entirety. His drawing is done almost entirely by a line that was taken from Greek sculpture and from Verrocchio's and Botticelli's attenuated version of the classic spirit. Though his line is incisive, graceful and varied, it is isolated from color, so that it detracts from reality. It is line preoccupied in defining contour of a literal expressiveness, and consequently it lacks the power that an added terseness would give. This linear overemphasis, inability to use color, and unbalanced use of light, all contribute to make his figures lack conviction as real things.





Piero della Francesca

Analysis, page 390

Arezzo





Fra Filippo Lippi

Uffizi





Rousseau (Le Douanier)

Barnes Foundation





Uccello

Showing sacrifice of naturalistic rendering in the interest of design.

National Gallery



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His compositions, while skillfully executed, are essentially the formalized ones of Leonardo; they lack real vigor, are usually of the conventional bilaterally balanced type, and are unaided by color. From Leonardo also he borrowed the method of using light and the sentimental sweetness, but he was unable to take over the reality of Leonardo's modeling. His greatest accomplishment, effective space-composition, came directly from Perugino. It stands out as an accentuation, especially when an attempt is made to merge it into an organic design in which the other badly used plastic elements must enter. The consequence of all these deficiencies is that when we analyze the composition which strikes us at first glance as effective, we find that the plastic form never really hangs together. Instead of plastic unity we find virtuosity and eclecticism.

Raphael was a great illustrator, but his illustration instead of supplementing plastic form constantly supplanted it. The passage of time has dimmed the interest of his subject-matter for the person of non-antiquarian culture. It depicts an excess of unappealing drama, as in "St. Michael Crushing Satan" and in the "Entombment," or an inane sweetness and sentimentality, as in nearly all of his Madonnas. The subject-matter brings clearly into relief the spuriousness of his effects and the lack of personal force in other respects which we feel throughout his work. As an illustrator he is inferior to Michel Angelo of his own period, to Goya, Daumier or Degas of the last century, and to Picasso, Glackens or Pascin of our own age, all of whom give the essentials of a situation plastically and with conviction. Like Leonardo, Raphael relied upon the relatively trivial, adventitious, and literary. In all his work, there is a Greek feeling that makes it seem artificial, formalized, devoid of spontaneity. All these unorganized and indiscriminately selected elements make his paintings seem spotty, an effect which is increased by the fact that even his best organized pictures are better painted in some parts than in others. In short, we rarely find in Raphael a powerful, original conception, uniformly and adequately rendered in plastic terms. He will always be the ideal of those who seek in art the easily accessible, the agreeable and superficial; that is, the antithesis of profundity and real personality. His appeal is to facile sentimentalism that has little to do with art but which offers a fertile field for critics who delight in flights of irrelevant rhetoric,



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### SUMMARY OF THE FLORENTINE FORM

Florentine painting starts from Giotto. In Giotto's **design** the essential points are an intensely expressive, terse line, novel and powerful composition, and a uniquely effective use of color. The result is a series of relationships, probably richer in plastic content than the work of any painter before or since his time. The feeling for design is present in all the great Florentines, Masaccio, Andrea del Castagno, Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Pollaiuolo, Cosimo Tura, Leonardo, Michel Angelo and Raphael. It is to be seen in a less powerful form in Fra Filippo Lippi; in Botticelli, it has become attenuated to a linear decorative pattern; in Fra Angelico it has fallen away to little more than a set of pleasant color-relations; in Ghirlandaio, it has gone almost completely to pieces. In the most important members of the school the **mass-composition** is almost invariably good but in Botticelli, Leonardo and Raphael it tends to academicism. In Masaccio and Piero della Francesca it is almost as original and powerful as in Giotto, and in them as in him it is reinforced by light and color, as it is also in Michel Angelo.

**Color** is at its best in Giotto, who alone among the Florentines used it as effectively as the Venetians, though in a totally different manner. In Piero della Francesca, feeling for color compares well with that of any other painter, but his limited palette makes his works less variedly rich than those of Giorgione and Titian. In Masaccio, the color is neither very rich nor bright but he gave it a new function by combining it with light to produce that aërial perspective and atmospheric effect which contributed to an intense realism. Michel Angelo's color, although secondary to anatomical depictions, is pleasing in itself and functions organically in the plastic form. The Florentine use of color, and the Florentine form in general, may be described as relatively austere in comparison with the Venetian. Even when the color is at its best, as in Giotto, it has not the rich, juicy, glowing character of the Venetian: it is more ethereal, jewel-like or cool than luscious and warm. There is no Florentine who has the sensuous splendor of Tintoretto or Titian, or whose color gives the abstract feeling of power which those great colorists achieved. The Florentines dealt much more with religious subject-matter than the Venetians, so that their concerns were more remote from human affairs. This remained true even when the dominant religious motive was modified by the classical. In the incorporation in plastic art of human values,

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especially of the more natural, spontaneous kind, they were therefore inferior to the Venetians, as we shall see in our discussion of the Venetians in the next chapter.

**Drawing** was developed by the Florentines to a high degree of perfection, although the comparative neglect of color as an element in line makes their draughtsmanship less effective than that of later painters. In Giotto the use of pervasive color minimized this deficiency of the other Florentines. In Masaccio and Piero della Francesca there is some use of color in the creation of line, and Michel Angelo's drawing is at least well merged with his color; but in Botticelli, Leonardo and Raphael, color and line remain quite distinct. Even in Andrea del Castagno, whose line is terse, vigorous, and made more powerful by the use of a swirl akin to that developed later by Rubens, the color-constituent in line is comparatively lacking.

The general effect of Florentine form is that of delicacy, while that of later men, like Titian, Tintoretto and Rubens, is robustness. This delicacy tends to weakness in Raphael, to mere decoration in Botticelli, to sentimentality in Leonardo, to a miniature-effect in Fra Filippo Lippi. It is a part of Piero della Francesca's coolness; it is illustrated in a very successful picture by Albertinelli, "Christ Appearing to Magdalen"; but in every case it distinguishes them from the more full-blooded Venetians. This same delicacy appears in the Florentine use of light, even when it is weakened by overaccentuation, as in Leonardo and Raphael, or combined with color to make atmosphere, as in Masaccio: it never has the feeling of reality that it has in Titian. In **space-composition**, the airiness of Giotto, of Piero della Francesca, and of Raphael has a delicacy that is comparatively absent in Claude or Cézanne.

In short, the Florentine form at its best is constituted by a strong sense of design, executed in delicate, harmonious, but not structurally used color, with expressive line, convincing modeling, effective lighting, and rhythmic, spacious composition. The ways in which individual painters added characteristic contributions of their own to this form, or allowed it to become unbalanced, weakened and cheapened, have already been indicated, and are further described in the analyses in the Appendix.

The obviously numerous and important characteristics of the Florentine form show the one-sidedness of Berenson's estimate of their principal achievement in painting. He asserts that this is their realization of "tactile values," that is, the effect of solidity



in masses. It is true that this effect does appear in Giotto, but along with many effects of far greater aesthetic significance. It is to be found further developed in Masaccio, but so are aerial perspective, atmosphere and other elements of realism which influenced profoundly the whole subsequent history of painting. It is most apparent in Leonardo, but even in him it is secondary in aesthetic significance to his general sense of composition. When tactile values do appear as the sole or outstanding quality of his pictures, the fact constitutes a defect and not a virtue. Berenson's estimate of that one element as the chief contribution of the Florentines indicates that he overlooks the importance of design in the largest sense, of delicate, pervasive color, of rhythmic movement of various plastic units, and of light in many rôles other than as an element in modeling. And to overlook those elements is to miss the aesthetic significance of painting.

It remains to relate the Florentine contribution to art to that of subsequent painters. Giotto's work has in it the germ of most of what gives modern art its value. Other members of the Florentine school made individual advances which anticipated those down to the present day. The Florentine general effect of delicacy combined with power and conviction is largely reflected in Poussin, and through him it greatly influenced the whole course of French painting. The step taken by Masaccio towards naturalism was enormously influential in the process of bringing art from pre-occupation with another world to interest in the world as it actually is; more particularly, his modification of line foreshadowed the Venetians, Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier, Renoir, Glackens and Pascin. He worked line, color and space into the perceptible atmosphere and realistic aerial perspective from which developed the luminous, colorful atmosphere of Claude, the Barbizon painters, and the impressionists. With the same elements he created the haze and the chiaroscuro which in Rembrandt developed into the means of realizing a profound mysticism.

Uccello's development of pattern finds a parallel in many modern and contemporary artists, including Cézanne, Matisse, Prendergast, and Picasso. His treatment of the background as a contrasting screen rather than as realistic representation, which is also to be seen in Fra Filippo Lippi, anticipates Manet, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne and Matisse. Piero della Francesca's color and to a considerable extent his line, light and modeling, and general design, were used by Picasso and other moderns in the develop-

## THE FLORENTINE TRADITION

ment of plastic form through pervasive color effect. Andrea del Castagno's swirl is an anticipation of that of Tintoretto, Rubens and Delacroix; his draughtsmanship forecasted that of Goya, Daumier, Renoir, Glackens and Pascin; and in his color, line and space, there are also suggestions of forms characteristic of Rembrandt and El Greco.

The Greek influence noted in the painters of the High Renaissance continues in Poussin and to a certain extent in Claude, and it is the chief stock in trade of the neo-classicism of the early Nineteenth Century. The fluid line of Ingres recalls the incisiveness of Raphael's line and the decorative quality of Botticelli's, both of them clearly Greek in origin.

The influence of Leonardo and Raphael upon subsequent painting is seen particularly in modeling and in composition. This influence on the whole has been deplorable, since academicians and purveyors of literature and sentiment have at all times drawn sustenance from it. Michel Angelo seems to lie somewhat off the main track of painting although his especial interest in anatomical representations is seen in varying degrees in painting since his time. Cézanne owes as much to Michel Angelo as he does to El Greco or to the impressionists.

All painting since the Renaissance has been so much influenced by the Florentine tradition, that it cannot be properly understood or judged by any one unfamiliar with the work of that school. The converse of that statement is also true, namely, that the meaning of the Florentine tradition is only fully revealed by the development that has followed from it, and that Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, and the artists of the High Renaissance are not fully comprehensible by those unable to understand and appreciate the most modern movements in painting.



## CHAPTER III

### THE VENETIAN TRADITION

THE characteristic Venetian tradition appeared much later than the Florentine, and never really represented the austere Christianity of the Middle Ages. The influence of the Renaissance operated strongly, but the classic feeling is more thoroughly assimilated and incorporated into a new and characteristic form. In the best period there was naturally a successful union of traditions, subject-matter was brought closer to the earth, and hence there is a greater naturalness in the Venetian form at its best than ever appeared among the Florentines.

The first of the Venetians to merit serious attention is **Giovanni Bellini** (1428 or 1430?–1516). From his teacher, Vivarini, he inherited the academic tradition of the Fourteenth Century but reworked it into a richer tradition which contains the germs of the work of the greatest Venetians, Giorgione, Titian and Tintoretto. The most important of Bellini's contributions was in the realm of color. He for the first time used color structurally, that is, he made it seem to enter into the solid substance of objects. He also used it as a means to create a circumambient atmosphere of color, by which the effect of color in unifying composition was greatly increased in power. It seems probable that Bellini got the latter idea from Masaccio; but he converted it from an atmospheric haze into a pervasive swimming color which surrounds and sets off the particular objects and contributes a further element both of unity and variety to the picture. Both the structural use of color and the glow were less in evidence in Bellini than in his successors. The glow does not yet suffuse the whole picture, but is confined to certain areas, and is more silvery than golden, though the reddish-gold quality is beginning to appear. This limitation of the glow to certain areas, together with the partial use of structural color, is seen in his altarpiece in I Frari at Venice.

Bellini's use of light was epoch-making in two respects. First, his modeling by light and shadow was taken over both by his great successors at Venice and by Leonardo, from whom it

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descended to Raphael. Bellini's modeling is more convincing than that of these Florentines because he achieves solidity without the overaccentuation that became virtuosity in Leonardo. Bellini's second great achievement by the use of light was the construction of a complicated but unified pattern which Giorgione, Titian, and Tintoretto used later with marvelous results. Bellini's composition remains on the whole within the academic formula, though his compositional design is enriched by new combinations of color (as in the "Madonna of the Alberetti") by graceful, fluid line, and by designs within designs to such an extent that the effect is decidedly novel. We realize the importance of all of these achievements when we see how much of the plastic values of the later Venetians is due to the inspiration they found in Bellini. For example, the poetic treatment of landscape, and its combination with figures to the enhancement of both, which we find in Giorgione, are anticipated in the "Sacred Conversation." In the I Frari altarpiece, there is the germ of Tintoretto's mingling of light and color in the rendering of texture. Bellini's use of color to build up the structure of objects anticipates Titian, although Titian replaced his sharpness of line with a more convincing blurring of outlines. In his work there is the dignity, avoidance of sentimentalized expression, and the uniform control of the plastic means which is characteristic of the Venetian School as a whole, and which contrasts with the opposite traits of Leonardo and Raphael. He was a very great painter, who is overshadowed by his successors only because they made even more impressive use of his means.

In the work of **Carpaccio** (1450-1522) we see Bellini's feeling for design elaborated into more complicated compositions, and also the tendency of the glow of color to become more silvery and crystalline. His compositions depart from the conventional central mass and bilateral symmetry, and his three-dimensional objects take on a rhythmic order in deep space. We feel his compositions as a procession of rhythmic units. He is among the greatest masters of space-composition: his very expressive handling of spaces was perhaps his most distinctive contribution to the Venetian tradition. In all parts of his pictures, there are intricate designs in the individual units which merge into the strong central design. In them we find light, color and space, balanced with three-dimensional figures showing a finer feeling for tactile values than any Florentine ever achieved. His rendering of stuffs,



though Italian in feeling, tends towards the Flemish in treatment, and anticipates the extreme textural richness of the subsequent Venetian canvases. He enriched the tradition also by great skill in the employment of architectural detail to enhance his design, and by quite a sensitive rendering of the spirit of place. His "Dream of St. Ursula" brings home to us, by the similarity of general subject-matter to Vermeer's, how far superior Carpaccio was to Vermeer both in grandeur of conception and in technical skill.

**Giorgione** (1477-1510) is the one man whose richness of plastic values makes him a serious rival of Giotto for the highest place in the hierarchy of art. Although he lacked Giotto's originality in conceiving fundamental principles, Giorgione has an almost equally great claim to uniqueness: he merged all the good in the traditions of his time into a new and distinctive form, in which are visible more of the values of painting than in that of any other artist, not excepting Giotto, if one realizes the importance of color. The foundation of his form is color; it is of the utmost richness in itself, and it functions in the design to the greatest extent of which color is capable of functioning. There is in it the rich but delicate quality which we term the Venetian glow, so subtly pervasive and unifying that, apart from any other plastic value, it is a supremely moving artistic achievement. In addition, the color is presented in an indefinitely varied series of designs, in themselves harmonious rhythms that move in and about all parts of the canvas, weaving themselves into a general design that has an emotional power equal to that of the richest symphony. One cannot imagine color doing more than it does in Giorgione: it supplies the maximum sensuous charm and decorative quality, blends with the light, welds together the composition, and contributes to the power and expressiveness of the drawing. He has an equally great control over the use of light. It affords a general illumination which we feel to be perfectly natural, the antithesis of Leonardo's and Raphael's artificial lighting. In its other uses, the light aids in modeling and in unifying composition, and forms minor patterns which enter harmoniously into the total design. The line is always expressive, rhythmic, and fluid. It builds structure and decorates it, and is not isolated from either the structure or the decoration. The composition, at its best, is entirely liberated from academic shackles, is wonderfully varied, perfectly realized in three dimen-

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sions, with beautiful spacing; the masses are convincingly solid, and are knit together by sequence of line, light and color. All this is accomplished without suggestion of overemphasis of any element: even the ubiquitous color is never out of place and never stands out by reason of excessive brilliance. This supreme merging of all effects endows every part of the canvas with intrinsic interest as well as with integral and aesthetically significant relations to every other part. In the "Concert Champêtre," there is not a spot that is uninteresting in itself or a mere transition to some other spot of greater interest: the eye cannot rest anywhere without finding the fullest satisfaction.

These plastic qualities are the legitimate foundation for an expression that is probably the most poetic in all painting. The note is primarily lyric, idyllic, arcadian; it is free from weakness and softness, and becomes stronger the more it is considered. The elevation of Giotto, the power of Michel Angelo, the drama of Tintoretto, the mystery of Rembrandt, are all present in solution. The intense but deep and restrained human feeling, the glamour and mystery of nature, the peace and the mysticism of all-embracing natural religion, produce a total effect which is, in the best sense, sublime. Giorgione's unique endowment as an artist is shown in the Castelfranco Madonna, which was painted at an early age and under influences comparatively academic. Into that composition which, by itself, would be formal and stereotyped, he injected a wealth of plastic and human values which make us forget the triteness of the compositional arrangement.

The early work of **Titian** (1477?-1576) has most of Giorgione's qualities, though in a weaker form. In "Christ and Magdalen" and "Sacred and Profane Love," there are present the Venetian glow, the manner of using light, the richly diversified, individual composition, the lyric quality of Giorgione; but these characteristics are slighter, less convincing, less poetic. Subsequently, Titian's work became less arcadian and more dramatic, until it covered nearly the whole range of expression. It gained in splendor and reality of color, elaborateness of design, gravity, depth and majesty. It offers plastic embodiment to the most lofty themes without recourse to technical tricks of any kind, and although it never reaches quite the height of Giorgione's at his best, it is infinitely more extensive in scope. The Giorgionesque quality never entirely disappears but gradually merges into a new form



## THE TRADITIONS OF PAINTING

which makes Titian's later work very different in total effect. His chief technical advance over Giorgione consisted in a still greater fluidity of drawing, in which the line gives place more and more to color which overflows rigid demarcations and replaces them by increasingly blurred contours. Drawing becomes a fusion of line, light and color, and is the means of some of his best effects, as in the "Man with the Glove." Here the figure melts into the background, without any sharp contrasts of line, of color, or of lighting, and yet it is perfectly distinct. It stands away from what is back of it, but the means by which that separation is effected are subtle to the last degree. There is general economy of means, of the highest type: the design is extremely simple, and yet every element in it is utilized to the utmost. The background seems to recede to infinity, but by the use of what means it is impossible to say. There is very little actual color and yet the effect is extremely colorful. The dull tones seem to glow with harmonious color used structurally and blended with light to give an effect of solid reality in a degree surpassed by no one. This superlative economy of means is something not attempted by Giorgione, and shows both Titian's mastery and his originality.

The same dignity and effectiveness in embodying the values of what is presented appear also in "The Supper at Emmaus" and the "Entombment." The effect of solemnity, of quiet, deep drama, makes these paintings among the greatest in existence. Similar rendering of religious feeling unobtrusively, convincingly, profoundly, is repeated on a larger scale in the "Assumption," in which the design is more complex than any attempted by Giorgione. It has greater wealth of secondary designs and a more symphonic or epic effect than is to be found anywhere else.

The standards characteristic of Titian's best work are not always maintained. In his "Christ Crowned with Thorns," there is an overuse of light, comparable to that of Leonardo and Raphael, and the effect is chiefly melodramatic. In "St. John the Baptist," a similar yielding to Leonardo's preoccupation with light and line has a deleterious effect upon the reality of his forms. But Titian at his best left a volume of work representing a more important contribution to painting than that of any other painter except Giotto, and in his influence upon later artists he was again second only to Giotto. Titian's forms are so important and so rich, and they are achieved by such a varied and skilled use of technical means, that no brief general summary could do justice to either

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the forms or the technique. It is only by detailed study of particular paintings, such as has been attempted in our analysis (page 416) of his "Assumption," that one can obtain an adequate idea of his extraordinary versatility and power.

Tintoretto's (1518-1594) form is fundamentally that of movement and drama. The chief technical means is a modification of line tending toward distortion and its incorporation into a plastic unit which is a swirl of light, color and line. This appears both in the minor details of treatment, and in the composition as a whole; for example, in the "Portrait of the Artist," this swirl is to be seen in the lines of the face, in the cheeks, and in the beard. In his "Paradise," the whole composition is a succession of these swirling units, communicating a quite particular quality to the canvas and making it powerfully moving. Because of the dramatic character of this swirl, Tintoretto is less successful than Titian in treating peaceful or lyric themes, but much more successful in portraying dramatic action. When Titian attempts active dramatic movement, we find relatively unsuccessful paintings like "Bacchus and Ariadne" and "Christ Crowned with Thorns."

Tintoretto's color is rich and deep in itself, it functions in the design, and is very well used structurally. It gets an added power by its application in his characteristic swirl, in which movement and power are fused. In his rendering of textiles we feel the same dramatic tendency, and this is achieved by illuminating the color to give irradiation of light and translucency of quality. At other times, as in the background of "Suzanne at the Bath," he makes the texture more clear-cut, metallic, lustrous, than it is with Titian. The translucent effect was further developed by El Greco, and the metallic by Paolo Veronese. The effect of his swirl is animation and vigor: his work is less tranquil than Titian's and entirely free from the idyllic calm of Giorgione's.

Tintoretto's composition shows the same tendency to movement. The more important masses are frequently placed at the extreme left or right of the canvas, as in "Suzanne at the Bath." When there is a central mass, as in the "Paradise," it is less a means for setting the composition as a whole at rest than as a focus of motion. The movement is quite different from and more solidly real than that of Raphael, whose incisive line and



sharp contours give a rather isolated movement. In Tintoretto, the whole structure of the object moves by a line composed of color, line and light fused into one. Tintoretto showed his greatness by the ability to realize movement in good plastic terms and so to control it that he could adapt it to a great variety of subjects, from dignified portraiture to the seething turmoil portrayed in his "Crucifixion." One of his most important contributions was in the use of light placed in contrast with broad areas of rich, deep color. By that method he achieved a particular quality of vitality and richness in the painting of the long folds of gowns. An even more striking use of this means is seen in the painting of skies. There he used a broad area of dark color in alternation with ribbonlike streaks of light in varying degrees of width. Both the color and the light are applied in a swirling fashion, with an effect that is intensely dramatic. El Greco made this device the foundation of a technique which has influenced many of the important subsequent painters.

Tintoretto's work shows how a great man can enrich an already great tradition. To the Venetian tradition he added characteristic personal variations in design, light, color, line, composition, rhythmic form. He reorganized Titian's contributions to his own ends. The swirl, and a new integration of light and color, show his ability to make the necessary modification of familiar technical means to render new dramatic effects. Even the tinting of the traditional glow is changed appropriately. He is inferior to Titian and Giorgione only in that his means are more obvious and less simple, that his color is not uniformly so rich, and that the conviction of reality in his pictures is sometimes not quite so strong. But he advances upon them in that he adds a new string to the Venetian bow. How important Tintoretto's contribution was is realized when we recall that El Greco derived chiefly from Tintoretto and that much of what is best in modern painting comes from El Greco.

**Paolo Veronese** (1528-1588) is typically Venetian in the best sense. His virtues are in the main those of his predecessors, though not quite on the same supreme level. He is less lyric than Giorgione, less imaginative than Titian, less dramatic and powerful than Tintoretto. His special ability lay in portraying the spirit of festival and pageantry, and this he did successfully in enormous canvases of great decorative richness.

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His particular technical innovation was the modification of Tintoretto's metallic luster into something more crisp, cool, and clear-cut. It is this quality that makes his textures appear brilliant, enameled and jewel-like, instead of soft and mysterious, as in Titian and Giorgione. He has the command over space that recalls Carpaccio's compositions, and great ability to render the spirit of place and the feeling of all the material objects in their own surroundings. He modified the Venetian glow to a yellowish or brownish color, with more coolness but with less of tranquillity, glamour and mystery. Color remains structural, though it is less glowing. Light is very well used in all its functions, to form patterns, accentuate movement, and render tactile values. In that he usually works on a large scale with prodigality of means, he never reaches the concentrated effects of the canvases of Titian or Tintoretto, but at his best he is able to give plastic realization to his chosen subjects with very great artistry.

### SUMMARY OF THE VENETIAN FORM

The chief characteristic of the Venetian form is the use of color, first, structurally, and then in combination with light, in the form of a pervasive, circumambient atmosphere or glow. The uniform richness of color as a sensuous element and its use to establish the relations constituting plastic form, was the supreme achievement of the Renaissance in painting. The use of color in drawing at its highest degree of general effectiveness is seen in Titian, and a similar use of it in drama is found in Tintoretto. Giorgione used color in heightening the imaginative value of the theme and in forming infinitely varied contrasts and harmonies. The Venetians conceived and successfully realized lighting, drawing, space, composition, movement, rhythm, all in terms of color; for that reason Venetian painting represents, as a whole, the pictorial high-water mark.

Compared with the Florentines, there is first of all the greater naturalness and spontaneity of feeling, which is due to an interest much more directly turned to the actual world. The Venetian figures are more completely realized in terms of the fullest experience, and there is consequently more human feeling in them. These figures fit more naturally into the landscape, and the landscape itself is more complete, rich and convincing because it is much more nature as we know it. In other words, there is an absence of that austerity which we see in the Florentines.



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The decorative element, which in the Florentines was relatively lacking, is very much in evidence in the Venetians. Even in the best of the Florentine colorists, such as Piero della Francesca and Michel Angelo, the effect of the color was largely formal rather than material, so that it does not so charm the eye as it does in a good Venetian picture. This sensuous richness, apart from all strictly expressive use of color, line, etc., increases the feeling of reality and gives an added satisfaction to the aesthetic sensibilities. For example, the Venetian glow over and above its function in holding the design together and adding to the glamour or mystery or poetry of the subject, has a direct appeal to the senses. We may say, in short, that Florentine painting is chiefly if not entirely expressive, and that Venetian painting, while equally and in many ways more expressive, adds also the very great value of decoration. Finally, as we shall see later, Venetian painting had a much wider and more profound influence on the subsequent development of the art.

## CHAPTER IV

### PAINTING SUBSEQUENT TO THE VENETIAN

FROM Paolo Veronese, Venetian painting degenerated through the stage of mere imitation as represented by Sebastian del Piombo and Palma Vecchio, into the crude overdramatizations of Tiepolo. A number of gifted painters like Guardi, Canaletto and Pietro Longhi came later and worked in the tradition, but they contributed nothing new.

The development of the tradition of Venice lay henceforth outside Venice itself. In Spain, El Greco developed Tintoretto's color and his distortions into a new and an even more expressive form; Velasquez derived his color from the school as a whole. Poussin merged the Florentine and Venetian traditions into a new, delicate, French form, and through him the whole characteristic French style since then was largely developed. Claude transformed the glow into his overpowering atmospheric effects, and thereby brought the tradition into bearing upon all modern landscape painting. But the chief agent in carrying over the Venetian effects to modern painting was Rubens, from whom developed, through Van Dyck, the school of English portraiture. From Rubens came also Fragonard and Watteau and, later, Delacroix, the impressionists, and also Renoir, as well as contemporary colorists such as Matisse and Soutine.

In Italy, there was no subsequent painting of the first importance. Correggio used the light of Raphael and Leonardo in connection with a richer color than theirs to achieve a form not wholly borrowed. The Carracci and other late Italian painters were purely eclectics, had nothing of their own to say, and became mere academicians.

**Poussin** (1594-1665) may be compared to Giorgione in that he took all that was good in the traditions of painting and fused them so masterfully with his own personality that there emerges a new creation, a definite form which is highly individual. He had great command over the plastic means and he used them to construct an infinite variety of distinctive forms of a graceful,



delicate poetic charm. In him, we find the whole of the Italian Renaissance in solution, and so individualized that we feel his own personal quality dominating the Italian. There is a lightness and grace in his drawing and color, an airiness in his spaces, a suavity in his patterns of light and in his illumination generally, a novel rhythm in the distribution of masses in his compositions, which make a new form, fundamentally and characteristically French in spirit and equally Poussin's own.

His work represents the reaction of a highly sensitive and rarely gifted Frenchman to the qualities in Italian paintings that gave the Renaissance its greatness. Poussin is one of the few great colorists: he had a fine feeling for the sensuous nuances of different colors and a rare power to make color function in harmoniously composing his canvases. The spots of scattered color harmonize both with adjacent spots and with the colors in remoter parts of the canvas. This color functions as much as line, space, or mass in unifying different components of groups of figures, and in organizing the scattered or different groups into a unified whole: it flows from one group to another and between other groups of figures, objects, trees, houses. His color must be appraised as a thing in itself and not in the terms of the great Italians. He never achieves the solidity with color that makes Titian's figures and objects so firmly real, nor do his canvases swim with the rich glow of the great Venetians. All such use of color would be foreign to the suave, graceful delicacy which is inherent in everything of Poussin's and which constitutes his own form. His color is delicately structural in his figures, and there is a glamour of overtones which makes a tender pervasive glow. His color undulates with the line and is integrated with line and light into drawing which is both highly expressive and of the choicest delicacy.

His figures have such a precision, a grace, an ease of posture, and are so indefinitely varied in positions, height, spacing, etc., that they have an arresting charm. In "Les Aveugles de Jérico" the group of figures offers no end of rhythms up and down, in and around the central figures, the separate groups, the collected group. Few if any of the Renaissance masters exceed his capacity as shown here. He converted Raphael's finely expressive line into something more substantially expressive by merging it with other plastic elements.

The many porcelain or enamel-like surfaces in Poussin arise





Tintoretto

Analysis, page 427

Academy, Venice





Masaccio

Florence





Daumier

Barnes Foundation





Fragonard

Louvre

Analysis, page 449



Renoir

Barnes Foundation

Modern versions of the Venetian tradition as it evolved through Rubens.

Analysis, page 475



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from a refining and delicatizing of the clear-cut, metallic color-quality found in Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese. His subsidiary designs of light or of the lines in garments, also suggest the Venetians, and occasionally his anatomical distortions follow the lines of Michel Angelo, but always with due modification in the interest of the distinctive Poussin form.

He advanced upon his predecessors by recasting their traditions into a new form, but his work represented no great step in the direction of modern painting. He was rather the last of the Renaissance than a constructive factor in post-Renaissance painting. The classic spirit in the Renaissance appealed to him strongly and we see it reflected with characteristically Poussin delicacy in his figures and in his compositional use of architectural features. In this respect he recalls the work of Mantegna, but the cold, rigid, stonelike quality of Mantegna's figures has melted into delicate and fluid grace of form and posture. In spite of his great gifts of space-composition, and his utilization of it in his treatment of outdoor scenes, his landscapes are conceived in the Renaissance tradition as settings for his themes rather than as things interesting in their own right. In the "Funeral of Phocion," the details of the landscape function as objects compositionally like figures. This general classic and Renaissance feeling makes Poussin seem less modern than his contemporaries, Rembrandt, Claude and Velasquez, or even Rubens. Poussin must be considered as a fine flower of the Renaissance, to the traditions of which he added a quality of choiceness made up of charm, suavity, and delicacy reinforced by strength.



## CHAPTER V

### THE FLEMISH TRADITION

THE Flemish tradition, prior to Rubens, has a distinctive color-scheme, founded on a greenish brown which is different from that of any school of Italian painting. This is used in backgrounds, in figures and in stuffs. Tempered with light to make a rhythmic form, it gives an effect quite unlike that of the Italian grays, blues, pinks and golds; even the dark paintings of the Florentines are less vigorous in rhythmic quality. It has an intrinsic vigor and solidity, and the lighting prevents the tendency to heaviness from becoming objectionable. While the color is brilliant, it is arid compared with Italian color. The general effect is dignified, quiet, with an ambient atmosphere. The painting of stuffs and landscapes is done with fullness of perspective and of detail and with considerable skill, but in the best men of the school the detail is rarely so emphasized as to distract the attention. Accentuation is dissolved in the unified form of the whole painting. Compared with the Italians, the Flemings seem heavy, and this holds true even in the case of such Italians as Carpaccio, who also employed detailed textural representations, but who retained the unmistakable Italian delicacy. The Flemings, however, are not wholly at a disadvantage by reason of the heaviness, which gives added solidity, weight, dignity. Sometimes, the tendency to miniature painting, which appears well marked even in so great a painter as Van Eyck, becomes the characteristic form of virtuosity and academicism of the school. There is also a disposition to make use of religious subjects of a sentimental type.

**Jerome Bosch**<sup>1</sup> (1450-1518) and **Peter Brueghel** the elder (1525-1569), his follower, are illustrators who tell their stories in individual and convincing plastic terms. The stories, though often ostensibly biblical, are always saturated with the local spirit of homely peasant *genre*, often with a rustic humor that tends to be grotesque and macabre. Bosch's plastic qualities are

<sup>1</sup> Bosch lived in that part of the Low Countries which is now called the Netherlands; he is referred to sometimes as a Dutch painter and sometimes as a Flemish.

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more powerful than Brueghel's and easier to grasp apart from story interest; his patterns of lines and planes in deep space are intricate, striking and bizarre. Both painters integrate with line and light large numbers of small figures which seem at first sight scattered at random over the canvas. Brueghel's landscape backgrounds show a sense of the spirit of place unusual for his time, and often a realistic color atmosphere of cold winter daylight. The works of both men contain rhythmic patterns and distortions of line and mass which anticipate present-day tendencies in design.

**Rubens** (1577-1640) grafted upon the Flemish tradition the contributions of the Italian Renaissance, especially of the Venetians. From the Flemings he took the tendency to realistic treatments of textures and of details in general, the hot, rather superficial and arid color, and the general quality of weight. All these were modified in his work by the Venetian influence. His color is fundamentally derived from the Venetians but is so transformed by his own gifts that a new and characteristic color-form is evolved. The color enters into and becomes a part of the structure of objects in much the same way as with Titian, though in the loosening of line by flow of color over contour he never equaled Titian. The pinkish or reddish suffusion of color in his pictures is Rubens's quite personal version of the Venetian glow. His drawing and modeling were inspired by the Florentines but so modified by Rubens's own color and technique that the influences are merged creatively. His line resembles somewhat that of Raphael, but is so much more broken up into short curves that it becomes more varied in true expressiveness as well as in decorative quality, and has a quite particular quality of animation. In many of his paintings the classic influence is clearly apparent, but that too is modified away from the static, formal, classic feeling of Raphael and Poussin. The muscular accentuations which Signorelli, Cosimo Tura and Michel Angelo used in modeling were taken over, modified and adapted by Rubens to give an effect rather soft in comparison with the majestic result which the same means afford in Michel Angelo.

Rubens's fusion of the various influences above noted yielded the most characteristic of his plastic means: a swirl of broken light, line and color, which is the peculiar instrument of his individual effects of animation, movement and drama. This swirl differs from that of Andrea del Castagno; it is brighter and stronger



in color, but it is used with so much abandon that it is less moving aesthetically. It is more nearly allied to the swirl of Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese, but is less powerful than Tintoretto's, and on a smaller scale than Veronese's. In Rubens the swirl is found in all the units of the picture and imparts a strikingly rhythmic character to all this artist's work, both as a whole and in its individual parts. It gives a feeling of indefinitely repeated movements to all parts of the canvas. Hence the general effect of drama not only in the action of the figures, but also as a contributory note in backgrounds and textures which would otherwise be quite static. The combined effect of vigorous movement, rich, juicy, harmonious, structurally used color, and hot light, makes a striking, sometimes an overwhelming effect. In his best work, there is that perfect equilibrium which results when all the elements alike contribute to the effect. This effect is original in both expression and decoration, and makes Rubens's form one of the outstanding features of the great art of all times. In richness of surface charm, Rubens approaches Giorgione among the Renaissance painters and Renoir among the moderns.

Rubens's form has both advantages and disadvantages. Naturally, it is best in the depiction of scenes of violent action and turmoil. It tends inevitably to the overdramatic, grandiose and flamboyant, and also to softness and mere prettiness. Many of Rubens's own pictures have all of these defects, and in his imitators they become the chief characteristics. The quality of softness and prettiness is paramount in Van Dyck, and through him degenerated into the stock trait of Reynolds, Gainsborough and the other English portrait-painters. It is sometimes also apparent even in good men, such as Fragonard and Watteau of the Eighteenth Century French School, and becomes greatly exaggerated in their imitators. In Jordaens the attenuation of Rubens's plastic form becomes melodrama, while in Delacroix's very uneven work is to be found both a successful use of Rubens's form and its degeneration into obvious histrionics. Attributes intrinsic to the form made it tend toward the specious and academic unless its use was controlled by a fine discriminating intelligence, restraint, and a sense of depth and dignity. Rubens cannot be ranked with the greatest painters, with Giotto, Giorgione, Titian and Rembrandt, because of lack of economy of means, simplicity and restraint, and also because of a certain softness of fiber. His spirit is grandiose rather than noble or elevated, noisy

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rather than perfectly convincing, and his means are obvious rather than subtle. His work rarely indicates that he had a grasp of the deepest human values, and compared to any of the supreme painters he is lacking in the sense of mysticism. Nevertheless, he was a very great artist and the contributions which he made to art were enormously influential upon later important men. Through him the Renaissance traditions descended to modern art and he also added to them powerful and original features of his own creation. His influence has been greater than that of Rembrandt and Velasquez, probably because their work, being more individual, subtle, and unapproachable, lent itself less to use by other men. Rubens, more than anyone else, determined the development of later Italian, Spanish and English painting. He was the chief inspiration of the Eighteenth Century French School represented by Fragonard and Watteau. Through Delacroix and Constable he played a large part in fixing the form of impressionism, and the debt owed him by Renoir and Cézanne is very obvious. From the historical point of view he is the most important individual in the history of painting after Giotto and Titian.



## CHAPTER VI

### FRENCH PAINTING BETWEEN POUSSIN AND DAVID

The Renaissance tradition which Poussin made delicate and French, degenerated rapidly through Le Sueur into the academic formula which we find represented in the meretricious paintings that spoil the French rooms in the Louvre. There remains the French feeling of lightness, but through attenuation of plastic means to the vanishing point, it has sunk to a spongy, weak delicacy.

What Poussin did to the Renaissance tradition, the important French painters of the Eighteenth Century did to the Rubens tradition. The animation, vigor, *joie de vivre*, with the great richness of surface, characteristic of Rubens, became in their hands lighter, more elegant, more delicate. In becoming French, however, the tradition was also attenuated. The swirl remained, but its vigor was largely lost, and it served for ornamental purposes more than for expression. This is less true of Fragonard or Watteau than of Boucher and the lesser members of the school.

Watteau (1683-1721) was influenced by Claude and he shows some of Claude's dignity, grandeur, and mystery, but compared with Rubens and Claude he is softer, less robust, more feminine. His blurred, diffuse outlines, together with the general feminization of the traditions which he took over, resulted in his characteristic idyllic, romantic form.

Compared to Watteau, **Boucher** (1703-1770) represents a general weakening of plastic form with a tendency toward superficial prettiness and overemphasis of decoration. This, and the triviality of his subjects, give some of his pictures the uninteresting and unreal effects of valentines. He was an extremely skillful painter, with a command of sharp, expressive line which endows much of his work with a charming cameo-like quality; but the means by which action is represented are specious, and the action itself slight. What makes him of importance is that his various

technical means are intelligently coördinated, so that his pictures unify. But he never really stands on his own legs, and his quite obvious use of other men's traditions challenges comparisons which reveal his inadequacy. He achieves a form of his own in that he found those traditions congenial to him, and made an individual use of them. His surfaces have the charm of delicate porcelain or enamel, which is lacking in the work of Jan Brueghel from whom Boucher absorbed so much.

With **Coypel** (1661-1722), the Venetian influence becomes more strongly marked, and in **Lancret** there is some of the quality of the Dutch *genre*-painters. In the most important man of the school, **Fragonard** (1732-1806), we see all these traditions as they were modified by Rubens into a new form. Fragonard had the most vigorous and original sense of design to be found in any of the group but it is still, in its essentials, the Rubens form delicatized. This appears especially in his color, which is of lighter quality, has an attenuated structural function, is less intense, less juicy, drier. His composition is good because it is fluid, rhythmic, graceful, leading the eye from one element to another, with no suggestion of formal, academic balance. His form is that of lightness, quaintness, femininity, idyllic delicacy, romantic charm, achieved by a technique which is chiefly a refinement of the Rubens swirl. He is differentiated from Boucher by the lack of the latter's cameo-like quality, which makes his composition less clear-cut. As contrasted with Watteau, he is less diffuse, less romantic, less idyllic and he tends towards a Bacchanalian quality whatever the subject of his pictures. In everything of Fragonard's there is a sprightliness which is his own, and a much greater sense for the third dimension and for solidity than are to be found in any other member of the school. In modeling he sometimes attains a more effective three-dimensional solidity than Rubens, and by a method which is more linear and without the Rubens adaptation of muscular accentuations fused with structural color. This modeling, while less solid than that of Rubens, is more graceful, and therefore better suited to Fragonard's general design of sprightliness and delicacy. Fragonard's preëminence among the men of the school is due to the fact that he used all the plastic means with individual distinction and was able to fuse them into a form which is none the less strong because of its delicacy.

Next to Fragonard in importance in this group is **Lancret**



(1690-1743), who shared the feeling of lightness and delicacy, but who gave it quite a particular plastic force by rigid figures establishing a series of forms that make up an appealing plastic design.

One of the most important French painters of the Eighteenth Century, **Chardin** (1699-1779), stands quite outside of the Rubens tradition. What Poussin and Watteau did for the Italian and Flemish traditions, Chardin did for the early Dutch *genre*-painting—that is, he gave it a French quality and thereby created a new form which many later painters, especially Cézanne, modified to their own ends. But in Chardin, the transformation meant a strengthening as well as a delicatizing. He took away from the Dutch tradition its tendency to literal representation and put into it a much more original and appealing design and a better utilization of space, color, composition, and drawing. No small part of this result is due to Chardin's thorough assimilation of the Venetian color tradition engrafted upon what he learned from Velasquez's subtle and deeply moving spatial relations. His pictures are full of unexpected notes that add greatly to the compositional variety. His atmosphere is clear and bright, his color is used structurally with conviction, and is more varied, harmonious and choice in quality than is found in his Dutch predecessors. His modeling gives the effect of solid reality entirely free from ponderosity. The light in his pictures is never dramatic, but it makes a very effective and subtle pattern which enters into and reinforces the design made by the distribution of masses, variation in the sizes of objects, and masterly handling of spaces. The tones are richer, choicer and better than in Chardin's prototypes in Holland, and the color is less peppered with light.

In all respects, Chardin successfully avoids overaccentuation and virtuosity, with the result that his pictures have a high degree of reality. Everything is done simply and subtly and the degree of attention given to each object is exactly proportioned to its importance in the canvas, so that it strikes the eye with an effect that exactly corresponds to its place in the design. The general effect is of dignity, masterly use of technical means, absence of tawdry or melodramatic effects, reality. With the exception of Claude's, his is probably the greatest contribution made by France to art up to his time. The surfaces of the objects in Chardin's painting are always French, always his own, never cheap, never tricky, just masterly. He is distinctively French of the Eighteenth

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Century, in the definite form of the time, which he simplified and made more solid, but never detached from the basic charm of the period. He puts poetry into the smallest and most trivial object. The combination of a real but homely poetry, a delicacy which is never weakness, and a full use of all the means of his craft, represent Chardin's form.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SPANISH RENAISSANCE

EL GRECO (c. 1550-1614) was a pupil of Tintoretto. We have seen that Tintoretto's particular form is a fusion of line, light and color in a swirl which produces very dramatic effects. The line is undulatory, so that it tends toward distortions of the shapes of objects; the light is used in ribbonlike streaks in gowns, sky, etc.; the color is deeply structural, organizes the compositional units, and has a pleasing sensuous quality. These particular plastic elements were taken over by El Greco and made the foundation of a new and distinctive form that shows a powerful use of the imagination in obtaining richer and more varied decorative designs. In his early work these elements were used in almost their original forms, so that at that period his paintings seem to be almost literal reproductions of Tintoretto's except in subject-matter. But very soon El Greco's line grows finer and more animated, the metallic and translucent qualities in the color of Tintoretto become more vivid and lustrous, and the ribbonlike bands of light become broader and enter into more dramatic contrasts with adjacent color. As his particular form develops, we see these lines, color and light worked into the most amazingly intricate patterns in all parts of the canvas, and these subsidiary designs enter into an extremely complex design, a rhythmic surge of tremendous aesthetic power.

El Greco's great command over line, light, color, space and design released him more completely from the limitations of realistic subject-matter, and enabled him to build a series of unique abstract forms of such power to compel attention that the spectator has little concern with the subject-matter. All the plastic elements are distorted deliberately in the interests of design: line becomes nervous, serpentine and writhing; color, iridescent, phosphorescent, ghostly and vaporous; light, flickering, eerie and ghastly. But these qualities of line, color and light overflow one into another and make El Greco's distinctive form of writhing movement, flamelike in its pervasive power and intensity.

An examination of his work compels admiration for the imag-

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inative scope that conceived plastic forms of such variety that they embody human values in subject-matter of the greatest diversity. At times, the plastic elements appear to be reeling in disequilibrium as we note that excitement and anxiety are the dominating emotions of the scene. At other times, the perfect balance of the plastic means through which the subject-matter is expressed, yields the effect of deep peace. The greatest range of human emotions gets adequate plastic embodiment through marvelous combinations of a really very limited number of plastic means. The line is so fine, so animated, so nervous and so often repeated in a particular unit, that it seems to form almost a tangle. The simple and stark colors—red, green, yellow, blue—take on a series of relationships through their variations by light and become a shimmering mass of variegated tones that insinuate themselves into the serpentine line to form designs that cover the whole gamut of color-contrasts and color-harmonies. We see a green flow into and tinge a red, blue or yellow of an adjacent object and give it a lurid, vaporous, unearthly effect. In another part of the canvas, a crimson-red transforms itself through gradations and admixtures of light to become, further on, sometimes a lavender, sometimes a flame tinged with an ultramarine high-light. An indigo-blue is bathed with light and emerges a steely gray, a deep ocher is varied to a lemon-yellow. Shadows take on these many variations of red, yellow, green or blue and become a part of the serpentine unit of merged line, light and color. Everything is distorted into a pattern, even the shadows, and particularly the contrasts of bright colors against a comparatively dark background are vivified and dramatized by broad streaks of light. We see a design in every plastic unit, every part of the canvas and in the canvas as a whole. Each unit shimmers, glows and flows into a pattern with other units—it is movement itself, but with an eerie, ghastly quality that makes the drama otherworldly. No other painter has ever achieved the deep, supernatural mysticism of El Greco's religious subjects. The same effect is felt to some degree even in his realistic portraits. In our materialistic age his subjects have comparatively little appeal; but his design, his plastic forms, are as moving to-day to the sensitive spectator as his subject-matter was to the Christian mystic of the Seventeenth Century. His distorted figures—with the narrow oval faces, crooked noses, squinting eyes, strange brows, ears of extraordinary angles, elongated fingers, twisted arms, swollen legs—these are



things in themselves and are their own aesthetic justification. To seek in them representative naturalistic values is to overlook both their intention and the total significance of art. The distortions are necessary to the design and prove that out of the elements of objects an artist can produce something that moves us more than anything we find in nature.

It is only since about 1880 that El Greco has emerged from his obscure position to recognition as one of the greatest artists. The reason is that before that date critics shared the popular confusion of the values of representation with the values of art. With the advent of the great men of 1870—Courbet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne—critical observers began to see that plastic form is something in itself of infinitely more aesthetic value than literal subject-matter. An intelligent study of modern and contemporary painting will reveal that its values depend to a large extent upon plastic content that has much in kin with the qualities that make El Greco's work art of the first grade.

Velasquez (1599–1660) is in a class by himself in at least two respects: first, in his command over the medium of paint, and second, in his ability to achieve realism of a vivid and particular character. He has never been surpassed in versatility and in the ability to use each one of the plastic means to achieve powerful results. His work is so individual and his means so subtle that it is not easy to classify him in the great traditions of painting. The influences of his predecessors are present, but they are in solution and converted into distinct entities that bear few surface indications of their origins. The chief influence was that of the Venetians: Titian's and Tintoretto's color and Carpaccio's sense of design and feeling for interiors took on new meanings in Velasquez's work. From the Flemish he took the green and brown color-scheme, enriched it and applied it to new ends. From the Dutch he took the feeling of stuffs, made their browns and blacks more lustrous, and modified their technique of portraiture to attain new realistic effects.

His colors are as rich as the Venetians' and produce results quite their own by the way they balance and enter into relations with each other and with the other plastic elements. His color is cooler, and more quietly rich and lustrous; it glows, shimmers and dances in a design the basis of which is contrast with other colors. Even his shadows are rendered in animated colors and

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become integral parts of quiet, rich designs. This iridescence, juiciness, shimmer of objects, shadows, space, and effect of contrast, constitute an important new color-form individual to Velasquez. It is conjoined with a light of a quite peculiar clearness and sharpness, which also has its own functions as illumination and as pattern. At times, light and color make an atmosphere that bathes the whole painting with its rich, fluid charm. His line is firm, flows gently into forms of sharper contour than we see in Titian and builds linear patterns equal to those of Carpaccio. It gives an effect of poised movement equaled by few other painters. His modeling is rarely in evidence as such, but it is there in varying degrees of three-dimensional solidity that harmonize with the general plan of the canvas as a whole. No other painter put into space-composition more values or adapted it more skillfully to a great variety of purposes. With all this great command of plastic means goes a quality of impersonality, a detachment, a freedom from expressed emotion, that makes Velasquez the supreme realist.

In him, realism takes the form of seeing the thing with an eye to its essential character; consequently, there is great simplification, elimination of everything not intrinsic to the thing presented. He differs from Rembrandt in being less imaginative, more concerned with what can be actually seen with the eye and less with the life in the object that can be divined by sympathetic insight. This is a part of his supreme impersonality, his entire elimination of himself in favor of the world of external objects. He shows us what he sees with his sensibilities and intellect. After he has shown it, we never doubt that it is real or that it contains the essential qualities that make the particular object what it is.

This impersonality of spirit is matched by his complete concealment of his technical means. It is by this mastery of the use of paint that all the plastic means are so completely merged that to detect the operation of any of them is impossible. This fusion of the means, more complete than in any other painter, shows Velasquez's originality. In Titian, color stands out, and even when it is most successfully integrated, we have more the sense that color is the stuff out of which the picture is made. In Velasquez, *nothing* stands out; color, light, tactual quality, the space, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, composition and rhythm of line and mass are there, but no one of them is what the picture is made of: it is made of them all, in measure and



## THE TRADITIONS OF PAINTING

proportion. Design is absolutely dominant, it assigns to each element the rôle to be played, and that rôle is played, but not overplayed.

Modern critics obsessed by the Renaissance and by the work of Cézanne have maintained that the painting of Velasquez is flat, that it lacks space-composition and modeling, that his color is superficial. Such critics have in mind the sculptural form of Michel Angelo, the elaborate modeling of Leonardo, the rhythms in deep space of Tintoretto, or the degree of structural solidity in color of Titian. But the point which is here overlooked is that in Velasquez's design, all these would be overaccentuations. In the infinity of his backgrounds there is space-composition at its best; in his ability to make color, qualified with light, reveal the feeling, the essential textural quality of objects, there are both structural color and tactile values. The critics who reproach him for the fact that he does not so use these means as to make them stand out obviously, show that they have not grasped the meaning of plastic form, because his avoidance of all accentuations is really the secret of his art. His design is subtle but convincing and is richly varied by subsidiary designs that show the balanced use of all the plastic means and are perfectly unified in the general design. The result is a plastic form that is absolutely real and entirely independent of every extraneous support. It is a combination of delicacy, charm, power, dignity, reality, mystery, peace.

Many great painters have found in Velasquez's work the source of developments that have been epoch-making. In nearly all of Chardin's work is the Velasquez feeling for spatial relations and for the essential reality of material objects. Corot's figures came from what he saw in Velasquez, and in both figures and landscape Courbet derived from him more than any other source. Manet learned from Velasquez the value of simplification, much of his way of using brush-strokes, and the ability to put reality in objects by means of the quality of his actual painting. In both Courbet and Manet we see the selective and generalizing power that enabled Velasquez to detach the essential elements of objects and present them in their picturesque significance stripped of redundancy. Courbet's color scheme of cool grays, greens and blues, and his feeling of outdoors in landscape, came directly from Velasquez. It is probable that much of Cézanne's search for essentials in objects in the world came from an unconscious absorption of Velasquez's obvious power to select and generalize by

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ignoring the adventitious. Impressionism owes much to Velasquez through the adaptations of Manet's technique, of Courbet's color and naturalism, of Claude Monet's use of colored shadows. Renoir shared Velasquez's interest in the visible qualities of the world of everyday people and events and took the same delight in interpreting them in line, color and space. Renoir, too, was detached, but it was the detachment of one who sees the reality of the world bathed in charm and poetry. In the work of Velasquez and Renoir we never see depicted the emotions of fear, anger, hatred or pity that we find in the work of even the greatest painters, Giotto, Titian, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, El Greco. Both Renoir and Velasquez render the values of the everyday world, in its richness, its reality and its sensuous charm. It is a vision that is never literal but transformed through the artist's deeper insight and incorporated in a great variety of plastic forms, which are satisfying in themselves and merge perfectly with the human values intrinsic to the subject-matter of the world we know by having lived in it. Theirs is a detached realism that moves us aesthetically more than expressed emotion ever does. They make us see and feel with our mind, in a situation in the real world, what we could not see except through the artist's deeper vision and greater sensibilities.



## CHAPTER VIII

### REMBRANDT AND HIS SUCCESSORS

REMBRANDT (1606-1669) ranks with the greatest of artists in originality, plastic power, and universality of the emotions his work calls forth. His form is characteristic, has never been successfully imitated and is achieved by fewer plastic means than that of any other great artist. His means are chiefly light and shadow, used in the combination known as *chiaroscuro*, by which he is able to depict a whole gamut of powerful emotions deeply tinged with mysticism. His line and color are limited in variety, but through their merging with *chiaroscuro* they give the effects of strong linear patterns and a richness and depth of color infinitely more varied and moving than those which many artists of high rank obtain from intricate line and brilliant color.

Rembrandt's *chiaroscuro* is forecast in some of the work of Masaccio and Andrea del Castagno, in whom, however, it is a mere incident. In Caravaggio it was used more nearly as a technical instrument. With Rembrandt it becomes a method and a technique and is used with such consummate skill that it has not the quality of a technical stunt or trick. On the contrary, it impresses us as the only natural and inevitable means of showing what he had to show, and we feel that his means do not hamper him in putting down what he saw and felt. Color in particular assumes quite a new quality and greatly increased power through the agency of his *chiaroscuro*. His repertoire of actual colors was very limited, usually somber and never very bright, but through the medium of *chiaroscuro* they take on a great variety of color forms that have tremendous power to reveal the significance of things. Dark colors, usually brown, go from darkness through varying degrees to light, rich, glowing gold and back again to darkness in a pleasing, graceful flow reinforced by lines, spots of light and masses, all merging into a moving, harmonious design.

With line and space his *chiaroscuro* also works miracles. Drawing as we see it in Botticelli, Leonardo or Raphael does not exist in Rembrandt; but the line is so related to the *chiaroscuro* as to achieve a distinctness of contour by means so subtle that it is





Rubens

National Gallery

This painting and the ones on the three following pages show how similar subject-matter has been treated in the interest of design by old and modern painters.

Analysis, page 437





Giorgione

Louvre

Analysis, page 415





Maurice Prendergast

Barnes Foundation





Matisse

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 499



impossible to say how the work is done. A dark figure against a background hardly less dark, makes a mass which stands out with fine three-dimensional solidity against a background that recedes into infinity. With means of equal subtlety, he renders the different feelings of hair, flesh, fur, etc.; when these are juxtaposed the edge of demarcation is perfectly clear, though there is no line to speak of, and the difference in the tones employed almost escapes detection. The intervals between masses are so clean-cut and distinct that each figure moves in its own world of space, but one that relates itself with other spaces and forms designs of simplicity and great charm.

No other painter has so combined economy of means with richness and convincingness of effect. Velasquez's means are perhaps equally or even more subtle, but they are more varied. Rembrandt not only realizes convincingly, but achieves a wonderfully effective design by the rhythmic ordering of lines, masses, spaces, and the harmonies of color blended with light and shadow. He has not the obvious surface decorative quality of Veronese or Rubens, but his expressive forms are so interrelated that decoration is fused with expression in a beautiful unity.

Rembrandt's technique seems the only possible means of making the physical appearances of things illuminate their intrinsic quality, their significance from within. He seems to feel the life by which anything is animated and to make it visible. There is somewhat the same quality in Giorgione, but it concerns an elysian life and is therefore more remote. Both are poetic, but Rembrandt's is the less obvious poetry, the mystic poetry of the things nearest us, which ordinarily escapes us. It represents the consummation of what Bosanquet calls "the home-coming of art," the discovery of profound meaning in the here and now. Rembrandt is a realist, but it is the real as interpreted and not merely as observed, such as Velasquez portrays. In Rembrandt's portrait of "Hendrickje Stoffels," the rendering of the quality of things is anything but literal, but it gives us the essence of the things as felt. In this sense, Rembrandt is the most mystical and religious of painters, with everything adventitious, remote, or perfunctory left out, the mystical essence of religion extracted and made one with the essence of human values. In him imaginative interpretation of the real world reaches its greatest height, with perfect plastic realization, and with complete avoidance of anything not capable of being rendered in plastic terms.



Rembrandt's weakness consisted in his inability to realize his plastic form in the majority of his paintings. In the "Unmerciful Servant," and in the portraits of "Hendrickje Stoffels," and of "An Old Man," in the Uffizi, we see him technically at his best. In the portrait of the "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails" there is the overaccentuation of his chiaroscuro that produces the specious and tawdry results that are nearly always found in the work of his imitators. His influence upon subsequent painting has been great but only a few painters have been able to utilize his contributions to new and personal ends. The most successful in this respect was Daumier, although other men, like Hobbema, Bonington and Monticelli, have used a modification of his principles with some degree of success. It became a stock trick with the Dutch *genre*-painters and sank to the status of a threadbare banality.

Dutch painting after Rembrandt is chiefly concerned with landscape and *genre*. Rembrandt had comparatively little influence on the painting of landscape, but his chiaroscuro lent itself well to the treatment of interiors and of the life lived in them, and the spirit of his work was not unlike that of simple scenes and everyday affairs. Hence, *genre*-painting was influenced by him, though none of the *genre*-painters could possibly be called his successor, for none had his poetry, his magic. The general effect of *genre*-painting is intimacy, an obviously though not profoundly appealing human quality; this, combined with very great technical skill, and a minute attention to the treatment of textures, fabrics, and still-life, constitutes the characteristic Dutch form. In the best of this group, Vermeer and Peter de Hooch, the skill is more than virtuosity because of perfect adaptation of means to ends. Except in Rembrandt, however, the Dutch always fell short of the highest rank: their form suffers from the relatively trivial nature of its preoccupations. This is seen even in Dutch landscape, which is *intime*, and has a *genre*-feeling compared with that of Claude. Hobbema, however, has a true plastic power which makes his work distinctive even though Dutch in general characteristics.

The Dutch painting of *genre* was the chief influence upon Chardin, and through him it affected Cézanne. Of the purely *genre*-painters, Brouwer was one of the most powerful; the level is sometimes high in Dou, Terborg and Metsu; it slips through Steen and Van Ostade to the poor academicism of that time, which persists in most of the popular painting of to-day. It becomes narrative or mere virtuosity without plastic unity.

## CHAPTER IX

### PORTRAITURE

IN portrait painting, an artist is much more rigidly limited than in such subjects as landscape or dramatic figure-painting and he is compelled to get his effects with a minimum of means; consequently, his ability to use these means is severely tested. His problems are: to make the figure seem to live, to distinguish it clearly from its background, and to make the figure and background unify into a design which is itself aesthetically moving apart from literal likeness to the sitter.

We see supreme triumphs of portraiture in Titian's "Man with the Glove," Rembrandt's "Hendrickje Stoffels" and Velasquez's "Infanta Marguerita" and in numerous Tintoretos in the Pitti. All these show extraordinary economy and subtlety of means, so that we find spaciousness in the design as a whole, reality in the figure, and a clear differentiation between figure and background, by means so simple and subtle that they almost escape detection. In each case, the effect is of convincing reality achieved by a design of great aesthetic power. These painters were the great masters of portraiture; hence the qualities in their work may be taken as standards with which to compare the portraits of other men who though good were less good.

Antonello da Messina's "Condottiere," in the Louvre, is an early example of portraiture at a high level in which the effect is one of realism and power rather than of charm. The means employed are primarily a contrast of light and shadow, with the light used in an obvious way; it does not overshadow but brings out the other plastic elements. The background is simply a dark mass, but by slight shadings in tone it is given separate existence, so that the head is clearly defined against it as an independent, solid, real object. In the neighboring "Portrait of Man" by Giovanni Bellini, there is greater variety of means, but they are used less subtly, so that there is a suggestion of melodrama both in the light and in the color; still, the picture unifies and is of high quality. In Franciabigio's "Portrait of a Young Man," also hanging in the immediate neighborhood, the figure is flat and



lacks reality, the whole painting is thin, soft, and it lacks conviction. In still another painting hanging near by, Raphael's "Portrait of a Young Man," the figure is made to stand out by the more facile means of striking contrasts in color, bright light, and realistic detail. Consequently, the effect seems cheap, in that the skillful utilization of traditional technique replaces imaginative power. We realize that Raphael, deprived of the use of his gifts for elaborate composition, especially space-composition, and for dramatic movement, lacks originality and is compelled to resort to what is essentially virtuosity.

With Tintoretto, the element of distortion enters portraiture. In his picture of himself, in the Louvre, linear distortion makes the face more striking, dramatic, and interesting in pattern, without loss of essential realism. It constitutes a departure toward the imaginative realism in which his characteristic swirl played so important a rôle. The swirl gives animation and power to the features and to the general expression; it also permits a duplication, reinforcement, and harmony of rhythms in the various parts of the figure and background which add interest to the design. As a portrait, Tintoretto's picture of himself is even better than the "Man with the Glove," but because of the greater complexity and contrast of elements it is inferior as a work of art to the Titian, in which the means are simpler, more merged and more restrained.

Compared with the greatest portraitists, Rubens seems inferior though his rank as a great artist in this respect is incontestable. His color, more brilliant than that of Titian or Rembrandt, is put to facile and obvious use in differentiating figure and background. While this method adds decorative quality, the differentiation and decoration seem cheaper than when they are accomplished by subtler means. Furthermore, while his greater wealth of detail and the skilled adaptation of swirling line and color lend additional interest to the design, these obvious technical procedures seem to be superfluous baggage that detracts from the simple dignity of the effect. His omnipresent dramatic sense appears in his treatment of the figures, and in the merging of light, line, color and shadow to realize the distinctive Rubens form in his moving, dynamic backgrounds. In his "Portrait of Henri de Vicq," the background seems not a stuff but a luminous atmosphere and the picture suffers relatively to Titian's "Man with the Glove" because the black mass of the gown in the Rubens functions only as a mass in relation to the red background, whereas in the Titian

## PORTRAITURE

it functions both as a mass and as an active element in design. In the Rubens, light or any other means of adding variety would have supplied the functional value that is missing.

In portraiture, as in other subjects, no painter's achievements are uniformly equal. In Titian's "Alphonse de Ferrare and Laura di Diante," the drawing and light are overexpressive in the Raphaelesque manner, so that in spite of the Venetian color there is a cloying sweetness. In Rembrandt's "Portrait of the Artist" (the Louvre version), the light is not used with uniform success and it obscures rather than illuminates the hand of the figure. In his picture of "The Man with the Stick," the very sharp contrast between the dark side and the light side of the face produces an impression of obvious and technically achieved melodrama which makes a form lacking in plastic unity.

An instance of portrait-painting which rarely reaches the heights of great art is that of Frans Hals. Only a very few painters had Hals's extraordinary ability in the use of paint, or his eye for the picturesque and striking. His figures are well placed against the background, and they have an attractive sense of animation, in posture and expression; but they are theatrical instead of solidly human in their qualities. His defective grasp of deeply moving human values is only emphasized by his superb technical skill. The admirably executed stuffs, for example, in the "Laughing Cavalier," have a positive intrinsic value and contribute to the general design; but we see how extraneous to art is such painting when we compare it with Rembrandt's or Velasquez's less showy but more convincing texture-painting. The heraldic device in "Nicolas Van Beresteyn," which is used to invigorate a background lacking in intrinsic interest, is another instance of Hals's cheap strain. His color is dry, either drab or overbright, and has only a superficial quality. He was undoubtedly one of the very greatest masters in the use of paint, and he had a good sense for composition, but he lacks the great conceptions and balanced use of means of the really important men. His art is constantly eked out by virtuosity, and the result is that he seems relatively unreal and tawdry. His influence upon subsequent painters has been enormous especially upon those who, mistaking virtuosity for art, turn out portraits that are clever exercises in brushwork.

After Rubens, portrait-painting tended toward mere surface prettiness. It is present very strikingly in Van Dyck, who is an elegant feminine edition of Rubens, with essentially nothing of



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his own to show, in spite of his great skill with the brush. He exaggerated the Rubens decorative quality and transmitted it to the English portrait-painters, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence, and the lesser men of the school, where it becomes prettiness and virtuosity of the cheapest kind, without any admixture of art. The single exception is Bonington, as may be seen in "The House-keeper," in which a very successful use of thick impasto, with slight reminiscences of Hals in the brushwork, is used in the manner of Rembrandt to give an expressive and dignified effect. Portrait-painters of the Romney type have both intelligence and skill, but their work is merely an attenuated repetition of what has been said by men who were really artists as well as skilled technicians.

In the last two centuries, portrait-painting, as a distinct type of plastic art, has fallen into disuse. Professional portrait-painters have as a rule been mere traffickers in the methods of other men. Although great artists, such as Corot, Manet, Renoir, and Cézanne, have painted portraits, they have treated them as creations, not as likenesses of particular individuals; in other words, the portrait itself has been increasingly a pretext and not the main issue. The gradual decline in portraiture has been interrupted, however, by one very important painter. Goya's psychological acumen and his command of the means of his art combined to make him the last great portrait-painter. After him, portrait-painting becomes merely an aspect of the new traditions, and presents no special or distinctive features. To those traditions, after our discussion of Goya, we shall next proceed.

## CHAPTER X

### GOYA

GOYA (1746-1828) occupies a high place in both portraiture and that class of illustration which is really art, because information is conveyed by skilled and original use of the plastic means, and is subsidiary to the plastic form. In portraiture he has been excelled only by Titian, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, El Greco and Velasquez, while in illustration it is questionable if he has ever been excelled. Like all great artists his influences for good and for bad are perceptible in the work of later artists.

One of his influences for good is seen in the early work of Renoir, in which the painting of gauzy, diaphanous textiles gives rich decorative effects, and a general feeling of lightness and delicacy to the whole painting. Those effects in Renoir were clearly due to what he learned from Goya. The bad influence of Goya is seen in the academic imitation of his work by the early American portrait manufacturers, notably Gilbert Stuart, Sully and the Peales. These surface imitations of art were created literally by the hundreds and our institutions of to-day are flooded with them. A painting done by Stuart or one of the Peales is always an imitation-Goya attenuated to aesthetic insignificance by skilled craftsmen who had no ideas, no originality, and no command over plastic means. The crime of putting such paintings in public art galleries rests upon the shoulders of historians and officials of academies who have lauded these American painters by sentimental banalities totally irrelevant to an intelligent conception of art.

Goya's painting is not of a uniformly high grade, and for the reason, perhaps, that as the official painter of the Spanish Court, he was compelled to execute the portraits of kings, queens and nobles whose softness, inanities and affectations were the very antithesis of his intelligent, rugged, courageous and forceful personality. But when the sitter's character appealed to him the resulting portrait may be hung with a good Velasquez and will hold its own as a distinct creation, even though it is lighter and less strong in art values. Goya derived chiefly from Velasquez and while



his work is in many ways an attenuation of the plastic values in his predecessor, he stamped it with the marks of a virile originality that makes it an artistic entity. His work also recalls that of Bosch, a predecessor who shared his plastic gifts and his ability for penetrating portrayal of character. Goya's work stood out in an age that was poisoned with the effects of David's soulless, academic imitations of the Italian Renaissance.

The characteristics of Goya's work are great facility in the use of paint, a fine sense of composition, great sensitiveness to the aesthetic relation of objects to each other, a comparative lack of feeling for color, and quite a special control over significant line that portrayed movement and human character. He was such a skilled painter of psychological tendencies that a spectator is never in doubt as to whether the subject portrayed was honest, solid and important, or mean, trivial and stupid. Those qualities he rendered legitimately in plastic terms, so that the element of illustration is adequately imbedded in a solid matrix of art values. For example, in the Prado portrait of the family of King Charles IV of Spain, human meanness, weakness, ugliness and stupidity are accentuated by the ornate finery and luxury surrounding the royal group. In the portrait of Dr. Galos (see page 223), the opposite qualities of intelligence, dignity and solid character are shown in the simple setting reminiscent of Velasquez's best work.

Goya's great command over line and his comparative lack of feeling for color gave his work a linear character, in which respect it may be compared with Ingres's. His line is not so sharp as Ingres's; it is shorter, and in defining contours it is wavy rather than continuously sharp and incisive. Goya's short, broken line gives fluidity, animation and movement compared with the rigid, static character of Ingres's drawing. In addition, his color, line and light are well merged in drawing, while Ingres's drawing is almost entirely linear. Goya's drawing gives an airy, warm, delicate, light, floating character to whatever is depicted and results in designs free from Ingres's tightness, more simple, more real, more convincing.

His color is lustrous, enters into harmonious relations with other colors in the formation of color-designs, is skillfully used in connection with light, and so attains forms of considerable plastic significance. But his comparative lack of ability to use color either structurally or to knit the composition firmly makes his work light, less solid and less strong compared to that of Titian,

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Tintoretto or Rembrandt. His color-weakness is compensated for to considerable extent by a strong feeling for composition, in which his forceful line, irregularly placed objects and a delicate sense of spatial intervals coöperate to give a stirring sparkle, animation and highly expressive character to the whole painting. Color undoubtedly functions in the ensemble effect, but principally because of its good sensuous quality and its arrangement in pleasing patterns. His most successful use of color is in modeling, in which, tempered with light and unobtrusive shadows, the color, light and line tend to form unified designs that give an added appeal to the delicate but solid three-dimensional quality of the faces, arms, hands, etc.

No small part of the delicacy present in Goya's best work is his great control of space-composition by means so subtle that they are likely to be overlooked. Much of this is due to his easy use of paint, by which he rendered color and light values with great sensitivity. For example, in the portrait of Dr. Galos, above-mentioned, the relations in space of the body, the table and the background are quite as subtly rendered and quite as moving as the space in Velasquez's painting of "Don Baltasar Carlos in Infancy."

Goya's ability to use light compares with that of the best painters. This is shown by the fine general illumination always present in his best work, by its use in connection with his line, by an appealing pattern formed by the spots of light and by its animation of the backgrounds. Light is always used in balanced relations with the other plastic elements and is never felt as an accentuation.

Much of Goya's painting tends toward illustration and toward psychological expressionism so that no matter how fine it is as portraiture, it is less significant as art than the work of the supreme portraitists—Tintoretto, Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt—in whom such expression as there is is more nearly incidental to the plastic form achieved by the strong and balanced use of all the plastic means. Goya fell from the high estate of these men because his use of the plastic means was unequal—his line is as expressive as that of any other painter, but his color is comparatively weak and rather superficial, so that his strong line is compelled to do the work that should have been done by other plastic means. In all of his work there is reality, but it is a less strong reality, it carries less moving power, less conviction, than does the treatment of



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similar subject-matter by Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Renoir, Cézanne. These great men rendered the universal qualities that make people and things significant, while Goya sometimes failed to do that because he expressed rather his own emotions about the characteristics of people, their goodness or badness, intelligence or stupidity. This results in an episodic character instead of the epic quality which a more detached rendering of universal values gives. In general terms Goya's work is too often tinged with emotionalism and illustration which, while important in art, are not the characteristics of art at its highest level.

## CHAPTER XI

### FRENCH PAINTING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

At the end of the Eighteenth Century there was an abrupt change in the tradition of French painting. The new movement was characterized by a revival of classicism in which the Renaissance forms of Raphael and Mantegna were used as the basis of the painting of the new leaders, David and Ingres. In what is termed "classic" there is a tendency toward accentuation of line at the expense of most of the other elements of the picture, and that influence taken over by the French led to a cold formalism which dominated the academies at the time of David and Ingres.

**David** (1748-1825) adopted the technique of the Renaissance classic period as a whole, but in spite of great technical proficiency he created nothing new: he merely repeated skillfully what others had already done. His shallow color, his general attenuation of all the plastic means, and his debt to clearly recognizable ancestors, constitute the final proof of the futility of mere talent in a painter.

In **Ingres** (1780-1867) also there is the clear-cut, cold formality characteristic of classic painting. He had, however, the artist's creative ability to make extremely interesting plastic units which reveal a fine feeling for the function of line, space and mass. The distinctive feature in his design is the personal and extraordinarily skillful manner of using line in the formation of sharp and clear-cut arabesques and rectangular patterns, which practically always unify in a total form that arrests and holds the attention. As a colorist Ingres is good only in the sense that he was able to use color as a reinforcement of linear form. His color has usually a pleasing sensuous quality and is used skillfully in a rather literal reproduction of textures and stuffs with agreeable surfaces. When compared with texture-painting by Cézanne it suffers greatly, because Cézanne adds significance to the object by making color an essential part of it. Ingres's color and form are separable upon inspection, while Cézanne's are not; the result is that Ingres's



textiles are less convincing than those of Cézanne: we feel the effort, not the reality of the result. Ingres's color is superficial and has little or no function either structurally or organically.

In all good paintings the background contributes to unity. In Ingres the background is usually the classic arrangement of a solid, almost monochrome tone, which makes a mere conventional setting of little or no intrinsic interest. His great skill in the handling of paint rescues this element of his pictures from banality, and while it functions as an element of the design sufficiently well to save the picture from condemnation, it rarely contributes anything to the total aesthetic effect. The point may be illustrated by a comparison of Ingres with Chassériau, who varied his backgrounds, made them more interesting, though he was an infinitely inferior follower of Ingres.

**Delacroix** (1798-1863) broke away from the classicism of Ingres and David and found inspiration in the Venetians' color, drama and pageantry, as transmitted through Rubens. The drama is intensified, there is a general swirl, a red like Rubens's; but Delacroix was a lesser man than Rubens, so that the effect is one of attenuation. His excessive drama also shows the influence of the Spanish form, as it emerged from the influence of Tintoretto, El Greco and Goya; however, it lacks Goya's terseness and concentration upon essentials. In consequence, Delacroix's drama seems offensively romantic compared to Goya's which is penetratingly realistic.

Nevertheless, Delacroix was both an important artist and a very important figure in the history of painting, principally because of his use of color. His color is brighter, deeper, richer, stronger than that of most of his predecessors. It enters into the structure of objects and functions powerfully in composing the picture. Although he had a strong feeling for composition, his habitual overuse of some of the plastic elements to achieve dramatic effects creates a disbalance which breaks down the design. For example, in the "Death of Sardanapalus," the dramatic clouds are felt in terms of line, light and movement, rather than of color, as they should to harmonize with the remainder of the picture. In general, he is inferior to Rubens in nicety of feeling for color in its intrinsic quality, its relation to other colors in the subsidiary designs, and its function in unifying the composition. The tendency to softness in the painting of flesh is often over-

emphasized, and the movement has not the degree of power and majesty that it has in Rubens. The tendency toward histrionics is not matched by a proportioned use of plastic equivalents: the effects are overdone, so that there is lack of the dignity which results when the plastic means are used economically and with a sense of proportion and balance. Rubens's form is realized through balanced movement, while Delacroix's partakes more of the nature of ejaculation.

The emphasis upon design, with comparative neglect of subject-matter, which has characterized the movement in modern art since the middle of the last century, owes much to Daumier (1810-1879). He influenced profoundly all his contemporaries, including Corot, Courbet, Manet and Cézanne, in this phase of their work.

Daumier derives from Michel Angelo, Bosch, Rembrandt, Velasquez and the Venetians. His modeling, which results in the convincing three-dimensional solidity that gives grandeur and nobility to a finely executed marble statue, recalls Michel Angelo. His superb control over space by extraordinarily subtle means rivals that of Velasquez. He modified the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt and achieved similar moving, mysterious effects. In the deep, rich color-harmonies that result from the use of somber colors, he obtained color-effects superior to those of many important painters who used a great variety of bright colors. By the combination of these influences, Daumier succeeded in condensing into a small space the effects that Michel Angelo and Rembrandt required larger space to render.

Daumier, better than any other man except, perhaps, Cézanne, knew how to select from the literally innumerable planes that constitute objects in space, and thereby create something which has all the essentials of a naturalistic object, plus an added forceful, convincing reality. Of the moderns, Cézanne alone excelled him in ability to make color function structurally in those planes. His solid, three-dimensional figures attain an added plastic quality by the superb utilization of space; indeed, a figure by Daumier is felt to be in space conceived in better pictorial terms than the more sculptural character of Michel Angelo's treatment.

The utilization of so few planes makes Daumier's works appear sketchy and fragmentary, but that is only because we compare them with their counterparts in nature. When looked at from a distance the meager lines and the comparatively few color-



spots convert the essential characteristics of an object into a more forceful, convincing reality than exists in nature.

As a colorist Daumier ranks with Rembrandt in achieving maximum results with the greatest economy of means, when he works with the same limited palette. When he used brighter colors, red, blue, orange, there results a deep, penetrating quality that makes his paintings glow with a richness comparable to that of Titian or Giorgione. The color-effects realized by means of the somber tones is well illustrated in "Porteur d'Eau" (see illustration page 183), where the monumental solidity of the figure is rendered in varying degrees of combination of brown and ivory. That figure, set in fine spatial relations, is, by means of chiaroscuro, made to stand out against a background very closely related to it in color-values. In "The Third-Class Railway Carriage," the reds and blues of extraordinary and appealing sensuous quality yield color-effects of a depth, richness and glow similar to those of the great Venetians. He worked principally in large areas of contrasting colors or tones that always enter into formal relations with each other, and those color-forms unify into a strong design that determines the quality of the picture.

Daumier's ability to employ space in a successful union with line and color has never been excelled. In comparison, Raphael's accentuation of space seems obvious and trivial. Daumier's massive, solid figures are always surrounded with a space which we actually apprehend as a reinforcement of their solidity. He makes the spatial intervals enter into harmonious relations with his colors and tones, so that even when he uses only somber tones his pictures are literally space decorations of the highest grade. This is decoration in the best plastic sense: it is definitely merged with actual structure, so that form is realized in its highest estate. Like Rembrandt, he succeeds in giving that mysterious feeling of awe, sometimes tinged with gloom, which comes from our contemplation of space successfully used in the hands of a great creative artist. In spite of the often trivial character of Daumier's subject-matter his paintings are highly charged with the mysticism which is the basis of universal religion.

His greatness as a painter was for a long time obscured by his obviously powerful drawing as revealed in his illustrations. He overshadows nearly all of his great predecessors in his ability to use an expressive line which owes its force to terse rendering of psychological states, as well as of actual movement and poised

movement. His merging of this line with color and light to render movement, makes him more important than Goya or Degas; Tintoretto and El Greco were his only serious rivals in rendering dramatic movement by successful fusion of the plastic means. Compared to Daumier in this respect, Michel Angelo is inferior, in that muscular accentuations figure more actively in his depiction of movement, and his modeling itself is achieved by means less intrinsic to painting. Delacroix's drama is inferior because the drawing is less simple, less terse, the expression is tawdry, and is unsupported by the fine utilization of space found in Daumier.

His successful use of light is implied in what has been said concerning his use of chiaroscuro. When the light is used for general illumination and for chiaroscuro, the disposition of spots of light in the various areas of the canvas makes an appealing pattern that contributes greatly to the effect of the plastic form as a whole.

His line is never sharp and incisive. Sometimes its broadness is made up of ragged edges of color and the line itself is in short wavy lengths that convey adequately the idea of continuity. This character of the line is responsible for the feeling of movement, the sense of actual life, that Daumier puts into his slightest sketch. By the juxtaposition of a few lines he conveys a degree of reality in essentials and of force that no detailed painting could possibly render. His terse, expressive drawing is the foundation of the simplifications and distortions that produce forms of tremendous power.

Daumier's influence upon subsequent art has been immense. His technique in various degrees of detail was utilized to new ends by such important artists as Courbet, Corot, Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Degas, Glackens, Pascin, Rouault, Matisse—to mention only a few. These influences have been subtle but are nevertheless present in the work of nearly all subsequent important painters who have utilized simplifications and distortions in realizing design.

**Courbet** (1819–1878) made a radical break with the romanticism of Delacroix, and turned for subjects to the world of everyday objects and events, which he painted with force and in stark reality. He started the realistic movement, which has dominated all the important painting since his time. In Corot, there is a glamour and romance, a reminiscence of the Watteau-Fragonard tradition, but freshly conceived and executed. In Courbet, there



is poetry which takes on an added strength because of its detachment from romance. The obvious lyricism of Corot is supplanted by a naturalism which is not bald, but so transformed through Courbet's hard, firm and waxy surfaces that the effect is a rare combination of power and poetry. His realism is dramatic without either the melodrama of Delacroix or the overdicate lyricism of Corot, so that Courbet expresses a more comprehensively aesthetic view of the world than either of these men.

Courbet advanced beyond the Barbizon School in eliminating the specious and obvious in achieving effective design. He knew better than they how to place his lights, objects, spaces, in the proper sequence and relation to create an organic ensemble. Furthermore, he used paint with such vigor that everything he did has intense power. He was a great colorist in that color is an integral and pervasive part of his design; but his color is often rather poor in sensuous quality and his lack of control of tones results sometimes in an effect of muddiness at certain spots. He was, however, a masterly painter, and a supreme artist in his feeling for the relation of things. He gives a rather subtle abstract of the deeper meanings of the great traditions, stripped of their external appendages and welded into a new and vigorous form. This has had a revolutionary effect upon all art since his day.

In figure-painting Corot (1796-1875) is much less tenuous than in his landscapes, though he is softer than Courbet, but with a softness that is achieved by plastic means handled with such consummate skill that we get a balanced creation, containing in solution the best traditions of painting. His figures are less powerful than Courbet's, but are more appealing by virtue of perhaps rather obvious human values. In figure-painting, both Corot and Courbet make legitimate use of the great Dutch and Spanish traditions and convert them into new forms by means of personal vision and great technical skill.



Velasquez

Louvre

Analysis, page 438

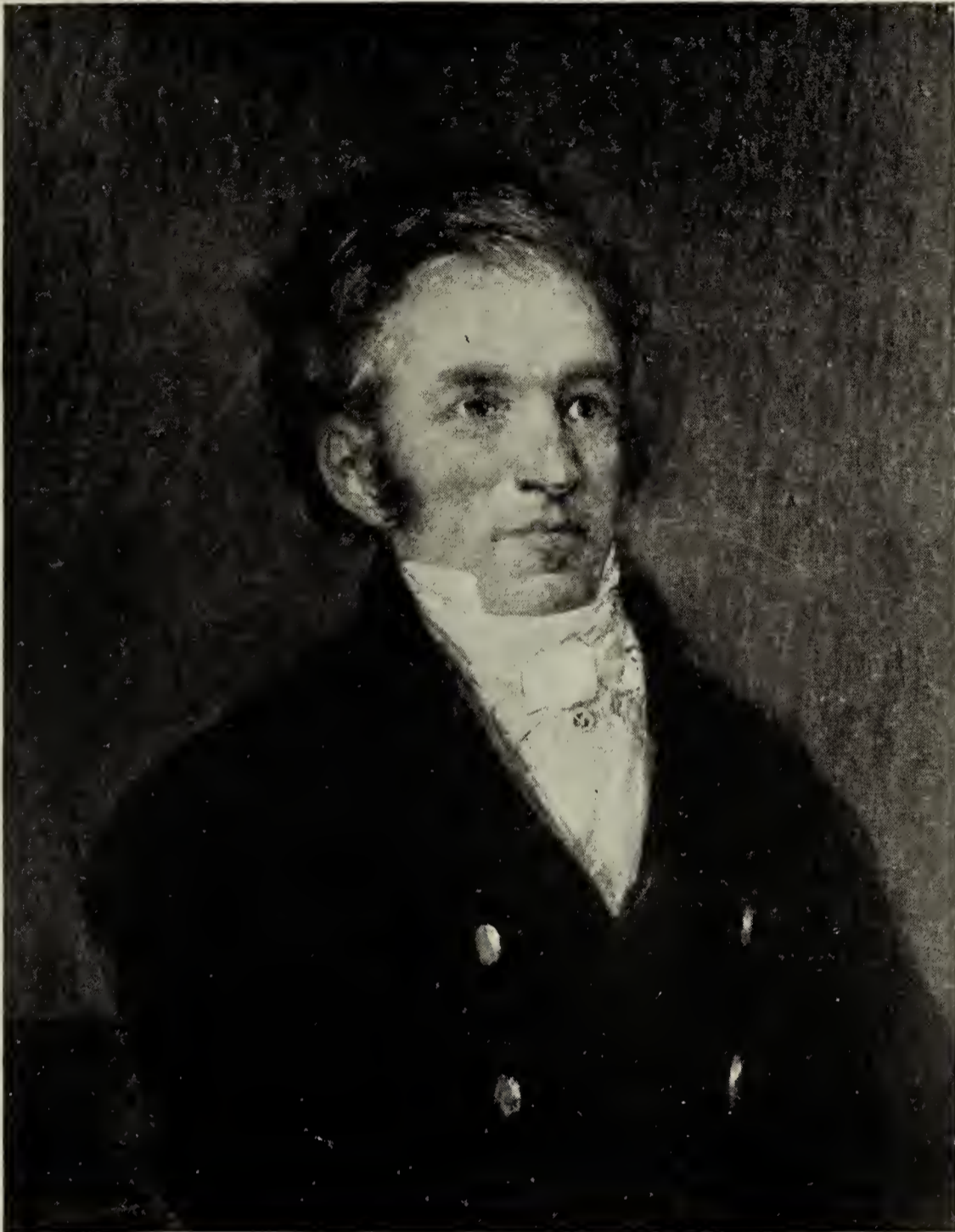




Rembrandt

Louvre

Analysis, page 445



Goya

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 450





Corot

Barnes Foundation

## CHAPTER XII

### LANDSCAPE

PRIOR to Claude Lorrain, landscape was an incidental setting for the life of people, sometimes done skillfully and with poetic insight and charm, but always secondary to the human story. In the early medieval and Renaissance painters, Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, Carpaccio, the landscape proper was varied by architectural features, and in Mantegna and Carpaccio these architectural features are more important elements in the effect than the natural landscape. Perugino made landscape approach nearer to modern conceptions by means of a beautiful spaciousness which is more purely natural than the architectural spaciousness of Carpaccio. In Titian and in Giorgione the actual sense of a living world surrounding human beings is very strongly felt. In Leonardo, even when the natural scene is very well done, as it is in his "Bacchus" and "Mona Lisa," its essential function in the picture is to heighten the appeal of the human beings portrayed.

In Claude (1600-1682) the primacy has passed to nature and although the human interest remains, the execution of the figures is generally badly done and they seem comparatively perfunctory and unreal. In him, hill, valley, sea, sky, light and atmosphere are really the chief actors in a drama which is the revelation of how nature dominates man, instead of man nature. Claude paid little attention to naturalistic detail in particular objects and concentrated his efforts on the situation as a whole: the effect is a feeling of place which is epic in its scope. The life is in the whole, not in the parts, but that life Claude could make real and impressive as could no other painter of landscape before or after him. He paints a romantic, Virgilian epic in which nature is felt animistically, pervaded with qualities that make a direct human appeal. It is surcharged with the emotions that come from natural landscape in its vastness, in its glamour, mystery, grandeur, majesty, solemnity, as we feel these in the Grand Canyon or the Valley of the Tarn. Judged as an independent entity, his is by far the most considerable of all landscape-painting. Claude took the Venetian



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glow and converted it into a new form, a brilliantly lighted and colorful atmosphere that gives the sense of a livingness in nature, a warmth and charm. He made of the Italian tradition something as distinctively French in feeling as the sense of out-of-doors, the *joie de vivre*, which we see in Watteau, Fragonard, Renoir. The obvious feeling of classic myth is so treated that it reinforces the general effect.

Claude realizes his effects chiefly through the means of composition and especially of space-composition, which create a plastic design of high order. The color is a pervasive effect, attained through the use of diffused color-harmonies, atmosphere and light that make powerful contributions to the plastic form. Color itself, as well as the structure of individual objects, was a matter of secondary importance to Claude. Detail in objects is rendered quite freely, but is lifeless and unconvincing. This, however, is strictly in accord with the requirements of his design—for any great interest in particular things would militate against the total effect which it was the purpose of his design to give. For the same reason, the drawing is without the terse, expressive character that it has in Daumier or Goya or Degas. Even the drama of the story in the subject-matter is toned down in individual interest and made contributory to heightening the effect of design. In many of Claude's paintings there are glaring evidences of his neglect of technical problems raised by the introduction of the story; but it is a proof of his genius that he could let the subsidiary technical omissions take care of themselves while he confined his attention to the chief purpose of realizing an effective total design. Claude had not Velasquez's or Manet's facility in handling paint, and his pictures lack the decorative effect of those of Paolo Veronese; but as renderings of conceptions of very great aesthetic appeal and moving force they are masterpieces of the first rank. To censure Claude because of his particular sins of omission and commission, such as the woodenness of his figures, or the perfunctory rendering of his trees, etc., is to apply a technical rule and to forget the essential rôle and purpose of design. Unfortunately, many of Claude's paintings show an overaccentuation of light that produces a rather cheap effect of melodrama.

**Rubens** was as a rule inferior to Claude as a landscape painter because the animation and movement which are intrinsic to his technique are not adapted to the placidity so often characteristic

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of landscape. Except when he depicts a storm or other evidence of turmoil in nature, his landscape suffers from the attempt to adapt his technique to an unsuitable purpose. His landscapes often have great value as plastic forms because they are rendered in rich, juicy color, strong line, and fine spacing, all worked into a unified design that is animated and rhythmic: but that form is not the form which natural landscape assumes in its usual tranquil states, and we feel the lack of fitness between Rubens's form and the natural form. Sometimes, however, as in his "Autumn, the Château de Steen," or in the incidental landscape in the "Judgment of Paris," the characteristic Rubens swirl is so toned down that it catches the spirit of tranquil nature which ordinarily eludes him.

The influence of Rubens appears in the work of the Dutch Seventeenth Century landscape painters—Jacob Ruysdael (1628–1682) and Hobbema. Both of them adapted the Rubens swirl to attain the effects of rapidly moving, rather tempestuous clouds, heightened in drama by contrast with the much darker trees. The composite effect is a rhythm in the movement, and a restraint which makes the Dutch modification of the swirl more effective in the painting of landscape. Ruysdael also owes much to Van Goyen, in the manner of handling his themes, but he added enough of the Rubens technique to make an original and typical Ruysdael form.

**Hobbema** (1638–1709) is by far the most important Dutch painter of landscape. He was influenced by Ruysdael, whose drama he toned down but made stronger. He added also a rich velvety quality, in place of Ruysdael's tendency to dryness and brittleness. The total effect of Hobbema is one of solidity, weight, power, attained largely through his quality of realism. Whether he paints a stormy day or a placid day, we get a coördination in the details, a harmony between masses and figures and cloud-effects, which makes him uniformly strong. His realism and strength came from a very personal vision, rendered by skillful adaptations of Tintoretto's use of light and Rembrandt's chiaroscuro, especially in the portrayal of dramatic skies and contrasting objects in the landscape. He is more literal and less original than Courbet, less capable of generalization and less alive to essentials. He often effectively simplifies, usually by varying the proportions of detail in one object as compared with the



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neighboring objects. His line also is so varied and so modified by light as to secure the expressiveness which makes his work far from photographically literal. As a master of design, he compares with Claude, but his design is sometimes more obvious and dramatic than Claude's at his best; it is more literally executed in point of detail, and his use of light is more varied and complex. But it has not Claude's scope, and his tendency to be episodic, to be a painter of *genre* landscapes, interferes with his rendering of the bigness and majesty of nature. In general, his designs suggest the Japanese—in whom also there is a tendency to accentuation, especially in the clouds; this same tendency appears too in the best of the Barbizon painters. Hobbema was a strong colorist: his color, although rarely bright, is fat, juicy, rich, and seems to ooze from the canvas. His debt to Rubens is seen by an inspection of the juicy spots of color applied to small areas of the canvas, in the parts of trees, houses, etc. This use is highly successful, though much inferior to the same device as later employed by Constable.

Hobbema's limitations may be illustrated by a comparison between him and Brouwer (1605–1638). A Hobbema, a Brouwer landscape and a Rembrandt hang side by side in the National Gallery. Hobbema's design, achieved by accentuation and dramatization of light in the sky and reinforced by voluminous masses of clouds of varying sizes, seems almost Turner-esque in comparison with the much simpler means, the use of a quasi-chiaroscuro decidedly Rembrandtesque, by which Brouwer gets the same dramatic power in the sky. This simplification, with freedom from any tendency towards virtuosity, results in a deeper, more powerful reality, which shows Brouwer's much finer grasp of the essence of things. Hobbema has a tendency toward surface prettiness, while Brouwer renders the form, that is the force, dignity and mystery of the scene. The Brouwer has a Rembrandtesque dignity which appeals to the deeper religious feelings, while in the Hobbema, superb as it is, we have the airy lightness of a summer day.

Constable (1776–1837) achieved greater power and drama than Hobbema and by plastic means that are less obvious and of greater aesthetic strength. His individual form is very different from Hobbema's, and the difference depends chiefly upon the different use and quality of color. There is more color, it is deeper, richer, and treated in quite a special way. Instead of being put on in fairly

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large areas, it is broken into spots, tinged with spots of lighter paint, so that no one spot is all of the same color, but is a mosaic of colors in itself. This is obviously the source of the color technique of Delacroix and Claude Monet. The resemblance to Delacroix is greater, because Monet's spots are smaller, more frequent, brighter, and more adapted to give the composite effect of one color when seen at a distance. Constable attains this effect also in considerable degree, but his spots of color are not played upon by light as are Monet's. His light is used more in the old-fashioned way of a general illumination with local accentuations than as, with Monet, to take the chief rôle in the picture. Constable's method gives a more realistic effect and firmer structural solidity to ground, trees, etc., such as one would see in ordinary life, without special appeal to the effect that sunlight actually gives to objects, as we see it in Monet.

Constable's color strikes us at once as rich, juicy, fat, and highly structural in quite his own way. There is a richness, a depth, which is somewhat reminiscent of the Venetians, but is attained by darker colors of varying shades and of uniform richness. These colors compose and unify the canvas. His feeling for landscape is akin to Claude's, but it is for landscape on a far smaller scale, and is so changed in the manner of presentation that Claude's influence is pervasive rather than apparent in any specific use of technique. This does not mean that the abstract principles of Claude's grasp of landscape are absent in Constable, but that they are present in a different form. Instead of Claude's grandeur, majesty, mystery, we have in Constable the charm of simplicity, of the *intime*, the quietly mystical feeling of the countryside. His spirit is that of local place, but is tinged deeply with Claude's vision of general landscape. Because of his better sense of color and a more balanced use of the plastic means, Constable produced results that are on the whole superior to those of Claude.

The painting of Constable is best appreciated by a study at close quarters. We then see in every small area an exquisite quality, obtained by light, line and color, merged into a deep richness that has the rare quality of the surface of a fine porcelain marked with accidents of firing. The decorative quality is secured by supremely skillful harmonizing of richly varied juxtaposed colors. This color-form gives a marvelous effect of strength and reality, plus a depth and richness which can only be compared with that of the Venetians.



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Constable's method of painting is as broad and as truly impressionistic as was that of the broadest of the impressionists. He simplified to an extreme degree by this broad painting: a face, an arm, a hand, when the figure is in a landscape, will be rendered by one or two brief touches or strokes. Wagons, houses, trees, are rendered with a greater degree of naturalistic detail than in the impressionists, with more attention to outline, and less to the play of light as a constituent in these large masses. The shadows are dark but rich, and the broad painting enhances the general decorative quality of the canvases.

Constable's composition is of the highest quality because it is so merged with the color that the two function together, as in all the greatest painters, especially in Titian, Giorgione and Tintoretto. The elements in the composition are distributed in an original manner with little in the way of symmetrical distribution of masses about a central mass. In general, he is as free from the use of obvious technical devices as any other great painter. His technique of color-division, patterns of light, etc., is so merged in the general quality of the landscape that there is a strong, composite effect attained without perceptible means. The plastic units are harmonized throughout, and blend into a rich, deeply-moving general design.

Constable derived from a number of traditions, but what he took from his predecessors, he individualized. He was influenced by Claude and also by the Dutch landscape painters, especially Hobbema. His rich juicy color, which came from both the Venetians and from Rubens, is handled somewhat in the manner of Rubens; but he added to what he got from these men in the matter of color a jewel-like quality of his own. He influenced subsequent landscape-painting very profoundly, and, more than any other single individual, he was the father of impressionism. It was chiefly his example and method that stimulated Delacroix and his successors to turn again to color after the colorless neo-classicism of David and Ingres.

**Turner** (1775-1851) began as a skillful imitator of the surface aspects of Claude, which he diluted and made meretricious by an infusion of tawdry melodrama and irrelevant literary baggage. He never escaped from indulgence in cheap contrasts of calm and storm, garish color and exaggerated light. His pictures are striking because of their superficial colorfulness and strongly accentuated

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patterns. When they are analyzed we find nothing solid except a skillful use of the brush. Everything is on the surface, even the constant effort to do something for which the requisite grasp of plastic essentials is lacking, as, for example, in his imitations of Claude. Turner's form is that of flashy illustration united with virtuosity and his pictures have no place in art.

The first important landscape-painting in France in the Nineteenth Century is that of the **Barbizon School**. These painters derived from Claude, the Dutch and Constable. They made Claude's atmosphere lighter, more silvery, sometimes more delicate, but they lost much of its plastic significance. They did the same with the influence of Constable, from whom, as from the Dutch, they got the *intime*, small-scale quality of their style. The skies suggest Tintoretto's, but are without his quality or force. In **Th. Rousseau** (1812-1867) the resemblance to Claude in composition, in glowing atmosphere, is most obvious. **Corot** is the most important member of the school. His form is delicate, silvery, lacy, and shows the influence of the Eighteenth Century French in its lightness. It lacks Claude's grandeur and Constable's strength and richness, but it is essentially genuine and dignified in spite of its lightness and the obviousness of its romantic appeal.

**Courbet's** landscapes are like his work in general in their stark strength and realism. Like Hobbema, Courbet painted landscapes which are episodic rather than epic. But his power largely compensates for this episodic character and makes many of his landscapes more satisfying than those of Corot. Corot's romanticism, in comparison with Courbet's realistic poetry, seems weaker, less dignified, less real and less well suited to the everyday needs of life.

**Millet's** (1814-1875) paintings are scarcely entitled to serious consideration as landscapes because he uses nature as a setting for a human story which is, in essence, sentimental. His principal claim to plastic consideration rests in his ability to portray movement of rather limited scope by means of expressive line. In this, his method is a modification of Daumier's, but it lacks Daumier's simplicity, directness and power. Millet's preoccupation was the sentimental one of depicting the life of the lower classes, the dignity of labor, the pietism of the masses. This is done well



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enough as illustration, but is of little plastic interest. He lacks good color, has no ability to put quality into paint, and has no feeling for big designs of his own. Such devices as he employs are academic. The specious use of light is very much in evidence in his pictures, and the shoddiness of his technical methods is matched by the cheapness of his feelings. He is undoubtedly an artist in his ability to grasp, up to the limits of his capacity, the sentimental qualities of things, but the things are as a rule the obviously banal. He is essentially a story-telling painter, his figures are an attenuated version of Daumier's, and his command over plastic means is so feeble that he has little title to be classed as an important artist.



Claude Lorrain

Barnes Foundation



Corot

Louvre





Constable

Analysis, page 455

National Gallery





Renoir

Analysis, page 471

Barnes Foundation





Cézanne

Analysis, page 486

Barnes Foundation

BOOK IV  
MODERN PAINTING





## CHAPTER I

### THE TRANSITION TO MODERN PAINTING

THE line of demarcation between painting which is and which is not modern is difficult to draw with exactness, but it is clear that impressionism made a sharp break with the traditions that preceded it. For practical purposes, contemporary painting may be said to date from the age of Courbet, Manet, Monet and Pissarro. In the work of these men, the motives of the later men are present, although not disengaged from the traditions which went before. The chief point of difference between the old and the new may be said to be that the moderns exhibit greater interest in relatively pure design.

In order to show the development of this interest, it will be necessary to trace the evolution of plastic design as something in itself, apart from the question of subject-matter. Criticism of any work of plastic art is valid in so far as it concerns itself with the form the artist has created out of the means at his disposal, namely, line, color and space. That is as true of the work of the Renaissance painters as it is of Cézanne or Matisse, and there can be no reasonable doubt that what makes the art of Giotto great is not the religious subject-matter, but the plastic form, the design, by which deep human values are conveyed. A variety of circumstances prevented the early Italian painters from making a sharp distinction between their interest in design and their interest in illustrating a religious or historical narrative. The spirit and state of culture of the early Renaissance required that painting fulfill definite public functions. It was necessary that church frescoes should illustrate religious motives, that portraits should reproduce their originals, that pictures ordered by states or guilds should portray specific occurrences of interest to their purchasers. The general conditions were such that books were accessible only to the few, and their function was largely taken over by painting. All these circumstances made it impossible that properly plastic or pictorial motives should operate without constraint. The history of the transition to modern painting consists of an account of the removal of all such irrelevant compul-



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sions, and of how the employment of the various plastic means came to be more and more directed to the realization of pure design. Such an account will make clear the essential continuity between painters apparently as diverse as Piero della Francesca and Picasso, Tintoretto and Cézanne.

Design, as it is found in modern and contemporary painting, appears in the work of the early Italians whenever literal reproduction is so modified that the arrangement and handling of objects make a more aesthetically moving plastic form. Giotto is, in his way, as far from literalism as Renoir. If we compare Giotto with his inferior contemporaries, we see at once that a large number of his simplifications must have been conscious departures from photographic representation. These departures are of the very essence of the appeal of his themes, and are clearly expressive of an interest in plastic form for itself. Even though his designs are always accompanied by a narrative, they embody the spirit, and not the details, of this narrative. In other words, they express a human interest of essential value in terms truly plastic, and such expressiveness is inevitably an enhancement and not a distraction. In this sense Giotto seems far more modern than such painters as Van Dyck, Reynolds, or David, in whom the rôle of painting is instrumental to such cheap human activities as personal flattery or surface imitation.

In the early Florentines, Uccello and Fra Filippo Lippi, interest in design was so paramount that contemporary academic critics propagate the obvious misconception that Uccello was principally an experimenter in perspective. But considered from the plastic standpoint, his work is a striking illustration of the value of a design which discards an imitative presentation of the spatial relationships of objects in favor of one which has greater intrinsic value. Fra Filippo Lippi distorted perspective in still another manner, and achieved a design which is akin plastically to that used by most of the important painters since Courbet.

Design is the animating motive in drawing whenever there is simplification or deliberate distortion directed to heightening of aesthetic effect; this is clearly discernible in Andrea del Castagno, in Michel Angelo, in El Greco, in Rubens and other great painters. In all of them it is only partly representative and more aesthetic or expressive in intent. In the Fifteenth Century Florentine, Masaccio, the deliberate distortions of line, light, and color produce an appearance that is both realistic and infinitely more moving





Cosimo Tura

National Gallery



Pollaiuolo

National Gallery





Greek—400 B.C.

Barnes Foundation



Michel Angelo

Sistine Chapel

The Greek tradition and its

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Delacroix

Barnes Foundation



Cézanne

Barnes Foundation

transition to modern versions.

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Rouault

Barnes Foundation



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aesthetically than any literal or photographic representation could be. The paintings of these great artists prove the absurdity of those ultramodern writers who contend that plastic form is an absolute creation of the artist, in which no attempt is made to render the quality of anything in nature. We maintain that such form can be no more than decoration, that plastic form at its best does seek to give an equivalent of something real—of fundamental aspects, of essences, though not of insignificant detail. In fact, at all stages in the history of painting, from Masaccio to Manet and Matisse, the departures from literalism by which a more satisfactory design is secured, accomplish *also* a better effect of realism. We have not gotten farther away from realities, but nearer to them.

Another form of modernism is anticipated in Botticelli, in whom design, free from realistic representation, concerns itself chiefly with decoration. This inferior order of design has its modern counterpart in those cubistic paintings in which design is reduced to the level of mere pattern; this is in the same category, aesthetically, as the pattern in a rug.

When a painter uses color which departs from the observable color of an object, that also constitutes distortion. Such distortion has been constantly practiced to enhance the value of design, notably by all the great Venetians. The Venetian glow, a circumambient atmosphere of color, is obviously a color-distortion introduced to modify, harmonize, emphasize, and set off the colorful aspect of things, so that the effects are richer than those ever found in nature. The most original element in the work of Matisse, that is, his interest in color-combinations for their own sake, is thus clearly foreshadowed in the Venetians. But this similarity is overlooked because of the great differences in perspective, solidity, and the quality of colors used by the Venetians and those used by Matisse.

Light is also distorted from its naturalistic effects in the interests of design. When used naturalistically, light accomplishes some degree of modeling and sets off color; but those are only a few of its functions in contributing to great effects in art. In Leonardo, for example, it does much more than this. Its modeling function is strongly accentuated and the way it falls upon surfaces is not in accordance with physical laws of literal reproduction in any given situation, but is so modified that it makes an independent pattern. It would be manifestly absurd to accuse Leonardo, one



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of the most advanced scientists of his day, of ignorance of the physical laws that govern the incidence and reflection of light; it is more reasonable to suppose that his distortions of light were used deliberately, with the aesthetic motive of forming an independent pattern. Both Leonardo and Raphael used light in the same manner, even to the extent of an accentuation that disturbs the balance of plastic means. A better use of light as an independent pattern that unifies in the total plastic form is found in most of the painters of the Venetian School, in Rubens, Claude and practically all the important moderns and contemporaries.

Line, light, and color are all highly distorted in El Greco, partly to heighten the effect of religious mysticism, but mainly to achieve a form of intrinsic interest which adds to the direct moving power of the picture without going through the circuit of appeal to the emotions aroused by religious imagery. Rembrandt's chiaroscuro is distorted light employed for two distinct and obvious purposes, first to show an objective fact, such as a face of three-dimensional solidity; second, as a means of making a particular arrangement of color and line with a specific effect different from that yielded by ordinary illumination. Even in Velasquez, where the effect of the picture as a whole is apparently realistic, the realism, like that of Masaccio, is attained by many departures from exact reproduction, all of which contribute directly to the creation of a form far more effective than any arrangement of objects literally depicted. In all these painters there is interest in illustration, but the purely plastic interest is present though it has not yet appeared in isolation.

The actual process of transition is to be seen in the impressionists, in whose work literal representation is scarcely attempted; the drawing is very broad, and much greater liberties are taken with the actual coloring of objects than in the earlier painters. With the impressionists it is the mode of presentation and not the object presented that counts. For example, in Manet's "Olympia" it is apparent that the interest lies in the composition and that the story is unimportant. The strangely modeled and proportioned woman placed in just that position and in just those relations with surrounding objects, creates something independent and more moving than any story. This picture represents an advance towards abstract plastic form when compared with, say, Rubens's "Judgment of Paris," in which it would be much easier for the spectator to lose his way in the narrative.

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One of the most important innovations of the impressionists was the distortion of perspective. Instead of representing foreground, middle distance, and background in terms of literal perspective, they distributed light and color all over the canvas. The result is a homogeneous color mass, embracing the entire painting, that forms a unified design.

This relative freedom from literary or photographic interest, that is, from the interests which are not plastic, recurs in all the impressionists. Their very technique, the use of divided color, is itself a departure from literalism, since it replaces a merely imitative rendering of colored surfaces by one in which the colorfulness of objects is better realized. In Monet, the sense of design is less vigorous than in Manet or in Pissarro, and he sometimes falls victim to an interest in the effect of sunlight on color, which interest is more photographic than plastic. But the greater artists of the group, Renoir and Cézanne, used sunlight and divided tones only as means to the achievement of a design which is purely plastic. Their forms are richer, more powerful, more convincing, than those of any of their predecessors in the Nineteenth Century. They not only sum up the painters who preceded them in much the same way that Poussin and Rubens summed up the painting of the Renaissance, but they created new forms that stimulated their followers to the creation of still other and different plastic forms. From impressionism all that is best in contemporary painting has been developed. It may be said that in Renoir and Cézanne, design is more completely realized in terms of color than in any of the early great painters, and that this would not have been possible without the researches of Monet and those who followed him. To them is due the credit for forging the instrument by means of which the effects characteristic of modern art at its best were achieved. To these achievements we may now proceed.



## CHAPTER II

### IMPRESSIONISM

THE movement known as impressionism was more deeply revolutionary than any preceding movement except the departure by Giotto from the traditions of the Middle Ages. It was foreshadowed in certain aspects of the work of Velasquez, Dautier and Courbet. The originators of impressionism as represented by particular effects of color and sunlight were Edouard Manet and Claude Monet, each of whom contributed something definite towards the tradition which has persisted, with varying degrees of modification, up to the present time. Among the participants were a number of important men including Renoir, Cézanne, Pissarro, Sisley, and lesser artists who worked with essentially the same method. Manet's art was founded principally upon the Velasquez tradition but with a still greater simplification of means that became technically more obvious than Velasquez's. He abolished dark shadows and supplanted them with color, or sometimes even omitted shadows where they would naturally fall. The impressionistic technique in its most complete form was developed chiefly by Claude Monet, with a still greater use of light in combination with bright color, adapted especially to recording the local effects of sunlight at various hours of the day.

Like all other important developments in either science or art, impressionism was not of sudden birth, a bolt from the blue. It was a natural evolution of methods which had their origin in the Italian painting of the early Fifteenth Century. We have seen that one of the most important contributions of the Florentine tradition was a development of atmosphere, of an aërial perspective, by Masaccio. He portrayed an actually visible atmosphere by means of light and color blended into a veil or haze. To this atmosphere, the Venetians added overtones of color and so achieved the well-recognized Venetian glow. Masaccio was also apparently the first to render realistic perspective, by which objects remote from the eye are blurred in outline by the use of line, light, and color. This atmosphere, aërial perspective, and the blurred outlines of distant objects, were utilized by the impressionists.

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Another essential feature of their technique is the use of pure and contrasting colors, applied side by side in small brush-strokes so that the effect of the juxtaposed colors is decidedly different from the effects of colors used singly. We have commented upon the use of colors in the work of Constable, especially in "The Hay Wain," and noted that the method was taken over with scarcely any modification by Delacroix.

Still another technical device was the use of a large area of single color so applied that at a distance it gives a greater feeling of reality than could be achieved by the painting of details. Velasquez practiced this habitually, as, for example, in his rendering of hair by an area of a single brown tone, which, when viewed at a distance, gives a very realistic effect of hair.

The impressionists' method of using light also evolved from the best traditions. The bathing of the whole atmosphere with light in such a way that its various points of contact with masses, spatial intervals, and color, form a definite pattern, was used by Giotto and by important painters of all succeeding centuries. Claude used it to obtain his special glow and this, as we have seen, was modified in various ways by Corot and other followers. The Venetians, as we have seen, used light in a special manner to obtain particular effects, and so did Rubens, Rembrandt and the Eighteenth Century French painters.

It is evident, therefore, that impressionism is an evolution of parts of various traditions synthesized into a new ensemble. The movement proper attained its characteristics in the work of **Claude Monet** (1840- ), and rapidly became the method of the great men of 1870. Without that technique the best of the work of Renoir and Cézanne would not have been possible. In current writings on art, one encounters constantly the statement that Cézanne was not an impressionist, but the absurdity of that claim can be demonstrated from any canvas of Cézanne, from his earliest down to the "Portrait of Madame Cézanne," which represents the perfection of his technique and the consummation of his powers. It is true that if we compare, say, the portrait of "Madame Monet Embroidering," with the above-mentioned portrait of "Madame Cézanne," the difference between the two techniques is radical. But if we trace the transition of the early broken-color technique of Cézanne through its various stages of development, we find that his final and perfected tech-



nique is merely an adaptation of the impressionistic method modified in its various details. It is only by a study of his work at all periods that one can understand his method of achieving the three-dimensional solidity which modern critics erroneously assert to be derived from the painters of the Italian Renaissance. The Venetians modeled by color, light, and line, so fused that they are indistinguishable except that the light is used as a high-light on the surface of the object nearest to the eye. Practically that same general method was used by Masaccio and the other Florentines, except that the light is more accentuated, and the color plays a less important rôle; however, with both the Venetians and the Florentines there is the same smooth, one-piece-like effect. In Cézanne's modeling, small patches of color are juxtaposed and the contours of these color-areas function in the modeling. Each of those colors is so mingled with light that close examination reveals not one solid color, or a one-piece effect, but a series of tones of the same general tint; this is a quite characteristic and individual achievement of Cézanne, and makes in itself a design that contributes no small part to the total aesthetic effect of the form. His work of all periods reveals that his final method of modeling is an evolution from his early typically impressionistic technique, and that the different effects at different stages of his career are obtained merely by modification of the contrasting colors in the method of their application and the size of individual areas.

It is equally true that Cézanne's use of light, whether of general illumination or of particular spots, comes from the impressionists, even though critics habitually state the contrary. But as in the case of color, sunlight has been so modified, toned down, and adapted to particular ends of design, that we are rarely conscious of it as we are in the work of the pure impressionists. Monet himself was so preoccupied by the particular and evanescent effects of sunlight upon objects at various hours of the day, that the result was very often a too literal reproduction of the superficial appearance of things, and not enough of either the feeling of essentials or the aesthetic effect which results when plastic means are coördinated to the larger ends of design.

It is the habit now of a few of the writers on ultramodern art to state that the impressionists left nothing except a series of convincing pictures of sunlight effects on objects in the world. The absurdity of the criticism will be revealed if one compares in points of

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design, a landscape by **Sisley** (1839–1899) with one by Claude Lorrain. By design we mean what each artist has accomplished plastically, that is, to what degree of success he has used the means—line, color, light, space—to achieve a form which is a thing in itself apart from the manner of bending those elements to particular ends; that is, apart from technique. In the Claude Lorrain there is a design that gives expression to certain human values, and in the Sisley is another type of design embodying other but just as genuine human values. The feeling which we get from the Sisley is rendered by plastic means unified into a design without recourse to virtuosity or meretriciousness. There is the same grasp of the general feeling of landscape but not the grandeur and majesty that characterizes the Claude. This defect is to a certain extent counterbalanced by a delicacy, a charm and a feeling of *intime*, that is comparatively lacking in the Claude. Sisley is, in general, episodic compared with Claude; but the Sisley embodies the artist's own grasp of the general feeling of landscape which Claude was the first to portray. This general feeling is heightened by the special intrinsic appeal of certain colors, and this adds to the total aesthetic effect of the landscape. This sensuous quality is much diminished in the Claude. It would be manifestly as absurd to condemn Claude for his failure to avail himself of the sensuous quality of color as it would be to condemn Sisley because he obtained special effects, which represent his own personal vision, through the medium of a technique which happens to be that of impressionism.

The major features of the impressionistic technique are as follows. (1) Application of spots of pure color side by side in all parts of the canvas. (2) Obvious brushwork in the application of color. (3) Variation of the sizes of the spots of colors and of the sizes and perceptibility of the brush-strokes. (4) Use of light in connection with color in three ways: first, as a sort of focus upon which the light is concentrated in order to bring out the glow of the color; second, as a general illumination by which the canvas is flooded with sunlight; third, by such a distribution of this colored light all over the canvas that a homogeneous color mass replaces the literal representation of perspective theretofore employed by painters.

With this technique certain effects can be obtained that are not possible by any other means, just as certain other individual effects



can be best rendered by the special technique of Tintoretto, of Rubens or of El Greco. Conversely, it is obvious that the indiscriminate use of the impressionistic technique would yield results as inadequate as, for example, those resulting from the application of Rubens's technique to the essentially tranquil aspects of nature. This is an instance of the general principle discussed on pages 40-47, that there are no rules for choice of technique except the intelligence of the artist and his feeling for the essential plastic qualities of whatever is depicted. Monet erred seriously in making the technique the means of portraying objects or situations to which it was manifestly ill-adapted. Greater artists, namely Pissarro, Renoir and Cézanne, kept free from his preoccupation and used the method with adaptations of their own better suited to express their individual vision. The modification in the hands of Renoir and Cézanne finally reached the point where the method went into solution, became generalized, and recognizable only by a careful study of the transition from the original to the finished manner.

The technique as Monet used it is responsible for some paintings which combine light, line, color and space in varied and unified plastic forms of aesthetic power. In all of Monet's paintings analyzed in the Appendix, there is great skill in the use of each of the plastic elements, and sensitive adaptation of them to the rendering of the essential quality of the subject-matter, so that the technique is felt as a means and not as an end. Even at its strongest, however, his form is never of the highest grade. His composition is far from that of the greatest men in originality and moving power, and his drawing is without the expressiveness of Degas's or Daumier's or Renoir's. Compared to Renoir's, his design is much less enriched with minor designs, so that the component units in his paintings have neither the individual richness of Renoir's nor their functional power. Monet's chief deficiency is in color. When compared with that of the great colorists, it is lacking in sensuous appeal; furthermore, its structural use is only moderately successful and it does not organize and compose the canvas as it does with Cézanne or Renoir. The result is that his form as a whole is weaker, lighter, so that his paintings seem superficial in comparison with those of his great contemporaries.

From the standpoint of actual achievement by means of the skilled use of the technique, Pissarro (1830-1903) is by far the

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most important purely impressionistic painter. His feeling for the sensuous character of color was finer than that of Monet, he had greater ability to use it in composing the painting, and he had a finer feeling for design in its larger aspects. A fine Pissarro, compared with the best Monet, impresses us with the completeness of its forceful unified design, its more powerful and expressive drawing, and its color of greater variety and finer quality pervading the whole canvas. Pissarro's ability to make the juxtaposed colors more dynamic by the use of brush-strokes gives effects comparable to those of Renoir's early landscapes: there is a rich, deep, lustrous glow that endows both the surfaces and the design with strong aesthetic power. His juxtaposed color-units are judiciously varied by the application of nearly uniform color in broader areas which reinforce and bring out the rich texture-like effects of the various objects in the landscape. In this respect he is sometimes quite the equal of Constable at his best. This general method of rendering broad areas in single color was taken over by Gauguin and made the main feature of his best work. It was adopted also by Cézanne who enriched its effects by juxtaposition with other and differently treated areas of contrasting colors. Cézanne used that method in all his work, from the earliest to the latest.

In Pissarro, perspective is rendered in terms of color, and in a more naturalistic way than in the Renoirs of the corresponding period. His composition has a general tendency toward the central mass with balancing units on each side, but, as with all great artists, his compositions organize in a rhythmic and balanced way from any point in the canvas. His spatial intervals enter into rhythmic relations with the other plastic units and contribute to the total effect of the design, which is that of a rhythmic use of line, color and mass.

At a later point in Pissarro's career, he originated the method known as pointillism, which consists in the application of color in very small spots all over the canvas. His work of this period is less convincing than that done in his typical broad impressionistic manner. It constitutes an obvious overaccentuation of a plastic means, with inevitable disturbing effect upon the general power of the design. Sisley employed the divisionistic method in which delicate and light colors are made the means of attaining a design which is a fine rendering in plastic terms of a rare degree of lyric charm.



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In the hands of **Seurat** (1859-1891), pointillism was made a method by which color effected unity of design. His especial ability lay in his great mastery of space-composition. He made each object function as a unit in the composition, the spatial intervals are clearly apparent, and the units are tied together by means of color. He practiced Manet's method of simplification of figures and objects to the extent of rendering them in broad masses of color with blurred contours. The combination of a fine sense of composition, the ability to compose with color, to make space dynamic, and to paint vigorously, give to Seurat's best work the character of great art.

## CHAPTER III

### MANET

MANET (1832-1883) was the link between the traditions represented by Rembrandt and Velasquez and impressionism, which Manet himself started, and to which he contributed much of its solidity and vitality. His influence upon the great impressionists, Renoir and Cézanne, and upon all subsequent painters of importance, was fundamental.

His early work is close to Velasquez's in general treatment, and especially in color and in manner of using paint to obtain realistic and convincing effects by very subtle means. This is seen in his "Boy with a Sword," in which the color-scheme, the contrasts of light and dark areas, the treatment of the figure and the background, the delicate spatial relations, and the manner of the application of paint to effect simplicity of detail, are all in the style of Velasquez. Yet the painting is by no means an imitation of surfaces: it contains a real grasp of essentials.

From the Velasquez manner Manet developed rapidly a style of his own, by contributions that started the movement which revolutionized the whole of subsequent painting. The change was not in one of the plastic elements but in all of them, light, color, design, manner of applying paint. He put color and light to new uses, devised a system of brushwork, somewhat reminiscent of Hals's, added new effects to comparatively flat painting, and achieved a new design, which carried an aesthetic appeal independent of, indeed, in spite of, subject-matter. He put new meaning into Courbet's demonstration that the simplest objects and situations in life can be made aesthetically moving. He replaced the crude, hard matter-of-factness of Courbet's style by a lightness, delicacy, and richness, which came from color, light and actual use of paint. An important factor was his marvelous ability to apply paint, by which the simplification characteristic of Velasquez was carried to the extreme and reduced to broad generalization of feature and detail. This generalization portrays the essential quality of the feeling of objects and obtains an added appeal by the very manner of its execution, that is, by visible



brush-strokes of rich, deep, but seldom very bright colors. He substituted for Courbet's waxy smoothness a simple flat area of better color and greater charm of surface. This point is exemplified in the Metropolitan Museum where Courbet's "Les Demoiselles du Village" hangs in the same room with Manet's "Girl with a Parrot" and in the Louvre where Courbet's "L'Homme Blessé" hangs beside Manet's "Olympia."

Manet was a great colorist—a fact that is overlooked in an age where the color of Renoir and Cézanne has established new standards—and his greatness in that respect consisted in making color fulfill its most important function, that of composing a canvas. His "Dead Christ with Angels" is an early work much in the Velasquez manner. The broad color-areas are the means by which the units are tightly knit into a solid, firm composition, which has some of the dignity and grandeur of the old masters. The color is in some places dry and brittle, but it shows how color of comparatively little sensuous appeal can be made organic and, therefore, of fundamental significance. The painting indicates that Manet was perhaps the first of the impressionists to distribute areas of color and light all over the canvas for the purpose of achieving a design. He made color and light the foundation stones of a series of compositional units yielding new effects, as indicated in the analysis of his "Olympia."

His preoccupation with design, as relatively independent of subject-matter, produced results that were responsible for much of the important developments of painting since his time. In the representation of objects there are the fewest possible lines, and these are never long, are not sharply defined, and are broken in contour. They are related to color and light, and thus give rise to a new kind of drawing, extremely simple, highly expressive of the essentials of what is portrayed, and a constructive factor in the total design. He abandoned the usual method of modeling by color, light and shadow, but combined a degree of three-dimensional solidity with an added quality of flatness that enriches the design.

It was Manet's recognition of the functional power of light that made possible some of the principal developments of impressionism as well as the later modern and contemporary movements. He used light in connection with color as the principals of his design, as a means of creating new compositional units of vitality and force, and of tying these units together into an organic whole.

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He made it an element in the color which he substituted for the dark shadows theretofore used to emphasize the three-dimensional qualities of objects. Sometimes he omitted the shadows entirely and made light function, although not realistically, in their stead. It was used in broad areas in combination with broad areas of color and effected color-contrasts novel in character and of great aesthetic power. Color was endowed, by means of light, with depth and especially with luminosity.

Color and light thus used in broad areas, together with drawing simplified to the point of extreme generalization, and the application of paint with obvious brush-strokes, make up his perfected technique. It was a very flexible instrument adapted to a great variety of uses. With it, he obtains the large and massive effects of moving color-contrasts, as in the "Girl with a Parrot," and the quite different results seen in the "Still-Life" which hangs beside it in the Metropolitan Museum. In the latter picture, the brush-work is the chief means of making the other elements of his technique so effective. The brush-strokes occur in varying degrees of breadth, in different directions, in variety of quality, content and thickness of color, and always effect interior designs of line, light and color. In some areas there are the juxtaposed color-spots like those which Claude Monet used as the basis of his technique, while in the peaches are visible the manner of brushing and of applying paint which Cézanne used. Manet's own technique, and the consummate results of it, are seen in the rose and its green leaves and stem. Here there are no details—one brush-stroke represents a leaf, another a part of the rose, another the stem. There remains only the general feeling of the rose and its parts; but they have a reality, a conviction, that no amount of painted detail would give.

Manet's actual productions and the developments for which he is responsible, place him among the very great artists of all time. His "Boy with the Fife" shows how superior he was to Hals, how much stronger than Goya, how much more substantial than Degas, and, especially how the Velasquez tradition in Manet's hands was transformed into a new instrument, with an increased range of power. His revelations of the possibilities of light made of Constable's juxtaposed contrasting color-units the very foundation stone of the best work of Renoir and Cézanne. Courbet's realism loses none of its force, but gains much in beauty, by Manet's modifications through the medium of line, light and color.



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His technical additions and his accomplished painting added something new, definite and beautiful to the essentials of objects which Rembrandt and Velasquez rendered with such delicate grace and skill. Manet was less of an artist than Rembrandt, Velasquez, Renoir or Cézanne, but he was inferior only to Velasquez in his ability to use paint. Everything that Manet painted has an exquisite quality that depends upon the paint itself; it is doubtful if anybody ever excelled him in this respect. The luminous quality which he put into paint was a contribution of epoch-making significance, as is readily seen by how much practically every subsequent artist of importance—Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Soutine, Modigliani—owes to Manet in that respect. There is present always in Manet's work a feeling for character, for the essentials of objects, portrayed by a line that is simplified to its utmost and related to color and light to produce powerful and deeply expressive drawing. His feeling for the music of space, subtly used, compares with that of Rembrandt and Velasquez. It is this command over the plastic means that makes every part of his best work alive with compositional units, tied together by means of color and light into a powerful organic whole. In his best work we feel the technical dexterity, but it is buttressed by so many good qualities that it does not appear as virtuosity. Unfortunately, as with many skilled technicians, Manet's vanity prompted him to "show off," and the frequency of that exhibition of weakness bars him from the class of the highest artists.

## CHAPTER IV

### RENOIR

AT all stages of his career, Renoir's (1841-1919)<sup>1</sup> work was as personal and his use of the plastic means as original as that of any painter since the time of the Renaissance. His earliest work was done under the influence of Courbet and of the Velasquez-Goya tradition; but Courbet's naturalism is freed from its heaviness and the Velasquez-Goya influence is endowed with a new delicacy and charm reminiscent of the Eighteenth Century French painters, though with an added note of strength.

From the very start Renoir's mastery of color and his extraordinary facility in using paint are the outstanding characteristics. His work of the early seventies is a long succession of pictures that, for color and difficult achievements with paint, compare with any by his great predecessors. The paintings of figures and of interiors at that period have deep reality with a strength, delicacy and charm that make them comparable to the best work of Velasquez, Vermeer, Chardin and Corot. Goya's superb rendering of the light, diaphanous quality of stuffs is carried to greater heights by Renoir's finer feeling for color: a piece of filmy material covering a darker one is so painted that the individuality of each textile is reinforced by a rich but transparent glow.

These early pictures of Renoir were painted before the development of the impressionistic use of divided color tones. At that period he worked somewhat in the manner of Manet's simplifications and broad brushwork but with more and richer color and with less evidence of Manet's obvious technique. There is no suggestion of the reds which he afterwards employed profusely, but there is great sensuous richness everywhere, heightened by the blue tinting of the shadows, variegated in the background by chords of color, merged with line, and so pervasively active as to function powerfully in composing the picture. The drawing is done chiefly with color and there is a striking fluidity of line. Every painting is a composite of many subsidiary designs, made up of line, light and color, and merged into units that relate them-

<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix, pp. 459-478.



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selves to each other harmoniously. The light arranges itself into a subtle pleasing pattern and also contributes to the modeling, in which color does not yet operate so powerfully as in the later pictures. The three-dimensional effects are not emphasized but are subtle, achieved without apparent effort, and they have a degree of convincing reality akin, sometimes to that of Vermeer or Corot, sometimes to Velasquez's.

The transition to Renoir's next period is marked by a change in technique. In the pictures painted in the late seventies there are suggestions of the impressionistic use of juxtaposed brush-strokes or spots or streaks of contrasting color, which at a distance fuse into a single expanse of bright color; but the effect is a certain obviousness of technique which was later overcome. Contrasted with his earlier pictures, these show a greater variety of colors. The rather uniform blue and ivory previously employed are supplemented by reds, yellows, and browns, used sometimes pure, sometimes modified with light, so that a whole gamut of color-variations is secured. As time goes on, this method of painting in juxtaposed color-spots is used more and more, but it is always used judiciously and is varied by means of broad areas of paint in certain parts of the canvas. This method causes the colors to melt into each other and gives a creamy, velvety quality, as in the "Pourville" landscape, and an opulent decorative effect which Monet never secured. At other times, the predominance of color-spots used in connection with bright sunlight, as in the "Boulevard" landscape, yields comparatively superficial effects, more like those of Monet and Sisley.

In all of the landscapes of the early eighties there is extensive use of the divisionistic manner, but its application to different material is so infinitely resourceful that both the color and the compositional effects are far more varied and powerful than those of Monet.

Renoir's researches in the impressionistic manner developed new technical resources that merged perfectly with his previous Velasquez-Goya-Manet methods. The realistic results of his earlier period were increased by sensuous charm, by an added structural use of color, and by a glowing iridescence. His contributions had changed the impressionistic technique from a mere device into a power for greater creation and more complete organization of the whole painting. It became one of the great and firmly founded traditions.





Monet

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 459





Vermeer

Analysis, page 447

Louvre





Renoir

Barnes Foundation





Degas

Barnes Foundation



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During the eighties Renoir developed temporarily a third style, marked by sharp, incisive line and dryness, almost acidity, of color. Its obvious linear quality led critics to assert that Renoir's work of that period is closely akin to that of Ingres, but the resemblance is all on the surface. The radical difference is that in Ingres the line is fundamental and the color, which is comparatively perfunctory, thin, and unreal, is mere decoration added to the linear structure. In Renoirs even of that period, it is the color that is fundamental: it builds up structures and welds together compositions as it never does in Ingres. The sharp line is merely a particular way of bringing colors into relation, and it compels the eye to follow the rhythms of color as constituting masses in deep space, rather than the movement and direction of the line itself. Ingres's line is tight and restrained, while Renoir's is free and more expressive of abandon.

Renoir's manner at this time is often considered a regression to the methods of earlier painters, but, as pointed out in the analysis ("Woman Carrying Baby," page 468) the modeling and other uses of the plastic means are distinctively Renoir's own. That the method was clearly an experiment in the direction of new color forms is shown, and justified, by the fact that the sharp line and the acid color gave a fluid, luminous quality to the forms such as no other painter ever achieved except in water-color. The worst that can be said of these pictures is that the color is structurally less successful than it later became and it was probably for that reason that Renoir abandoned the method.

In the late eighties, he turned his attention toward the development of a technique that would enable him to render the movement of volumes in deep space, and in 1889 he succeeded in doing it with great conviction and appeal. These masses are so free from minute detail or obvious realism that to an inexperienced observer they often seem to be scarcely solid at all. But plastically considered they realize perfectly the essence of the massive quality, without its adventitious detail, in a degree comparable to that of Rembrandt and Velasquez. The rhythm is made more pervasive and powerful (see analysis of "Mt. St. Victoire," page 470) by the flow of color throughout the picture, partly by the modification of local color in the interest of harmony and partly by the use of a color suffusion which recalls the Venetian glow. As Renoir perfected his individual form, the rendering of masses gradually became less clearly defined, more floating and vaporous, but not



less convincing. The impressionistic technique has become more and more generalized, and the individual brush-strokes appear subtly, and only in restricted parts of the canvas. By this time Renoir had reached the point of giving the large-scale effects of landscape with an impressiveness worthy of Claude, to which he added the grasp of the spirit of local place, the *intime* charm of Constable. This combination of epic grandeur, of lyric charm, of a dramatic quality, reminiscent of Hobbema and Corot, appears in Renoir's landscape painting throughout the rest of his life.

In the nineties the technique itself comes to be so completely flexible that a distinctive quality is given to each repetition of the same subject in only slightly altered form. At this period he painted a series of pictures of the same young girl, each of which is so varied in color and drawing that there is no suggestion of duplication. Delicacy, charm, and reality are attained in each one, but they are different and distinctive in each case. Drawing, by means of color, has become extremely fluid, and there is fidelity to the characteristic feeling of things worthy of Velasquez. Literalism is completely avoided and all the ordinary means of rendering solidity, outline, perspective, begin to be replaced by obvious distortions. The interest in relatively abstract design comes to be more and more dominant. Recognizable objects never fully disappear, but they are very freely rendered and their significance becomes almost purely plastic, that is, they are conceived chiefly as elements in the design. It is ability to accomplish this, with no loss of conviction, no degradation of the form to the status of mere pattern, that marks Renoir as an artist of the first magnitude. His design is created out of many lesser designs, so that every part of his canvases has an intrinsic interest as well as a functional interest, the whole forming a monumental effect comparable with that of Giorgione or Titian. His pictures have come to be as varied and harmonious as a fugue or symphony.

At the beginning of the present century, Renoir had reached the full control of his powers and thereafter he deepened and enriched still further his color-values. In his figures there is an increasing use of red and a more voluminous and more voluptuous three-dimensional solidity. In his landscapes there is often a major theme of emerald, ruby, or lilac-blue, around which there is rose melting into violet, blue into shimmering green, with a pearly atmosphere, giving an effect of deep quietude, dignity,

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serenity, majesty, peace. In everything he painted there is a more convincing massiveness, and a more powerful three-dimensional rhythm. The means he adapted to this end is a swirl not unlike that of Rubens, but of larger scope and much more moving. Color becomes paramount—it indicates perspective, suffuses the whole painting, increases the contrapuntal richness of forms, welds the units together into a rich and powerful design. He left his preceptors constantly further behind, and attained by his own technique to much of the classic spirit of the best Renaissance painting. This classic spirit becomes increasingly evident towards the end of his life, and shows how profoundly he had assimilated and lent new life to all the valuable influences in art. More than that of any other painter his work constitutes an epitome and rounding-out of the whole history of painting.

We may now summarize Renoir's characteristics as they appear in all periods of his work. The foundation of his painting is color as it came from Fragonard and Rubens, and through Rubens from the Venetians. In the use of color he was an impressionist, though he transcended everything in that technique which is suggestive of formula or mannerism. It is not only in the use of color that he advances upon Rubens and Fragonard, for his spirit is essentially different. There is at all times in Rubens's and Fragonard's work a kind of remoteness and, in consequence, loss of perfect reality. In Rubens, this took the form of the flamboyant, the grandiose; in Fragonard, of triviality, of artificiality. Renoir's debt to the Dutch, to Velasquez, and to the realists Courbet and Manet of his own century, is evidenced by his much greater interest in the things of everyday life. His temperament made him love and observe attentively the commonplace people and incidents of life, so that in his hands they cease to be commonplace and become suffused with poetic charm. He is at home with them and he delights in enveloping them with the wealth of sensuous quality, the voluptuousness, that came from his own rich endowment.

His delight is that of an artist, not of an animal, for his voluptuousness is free from sensuality. He has an unerring grasp upon essentials; hence the truth and naturalness of his drawing, the success with which he makes his people reveal themselves in the performance of some ordinary act, such as taking hold of a cup or handling a needle, or in the unpremeditated play of their features. His sense of the dramatic in the events of everyday life is compa-



nable to that of Degas, but unlike him Renoir never despises the people whom he shows acting. His pleasure in the beautiful things of the world is revealed in the richness and delicacy of his textiles and in his rendering of human beings pulsating with life and glad to be alive.

The sensuous charm and the general decorative quality of Renoir's work is achieved by color-chords of a wealth nowhere else paralleled. In Rubens the color is less brilliant and less real, and he lacked the characteristically French delicacy of Renoir, which refined and made more subtle the elements of decoration. In Renoir, everything is fluid, light, transparent; the flesh is luminous, the atmosphere is pearly; when the surfaces are hard, their color is jewel-like. In his work, vulgar scenes and persons lose their vulgarity. A group of them, seen as an ensemble, resembles the flowers in a bouquet. His nudes are symbols, not naked women. Nobody ever painted with more improvisation, more spontaneously, freely, than he did.

All this decorative quality is not purchased at the expense of form, of reality, for his rich, juicy, varied, glowing color is also structural and compositional. It functions in design, reinforces drawing and perspective, and heightens the rhythms of the picture. His line is not only rhythmic but is as expressive of the character of personality, of drama, as is Degas's. He can give the grandeur and majesty of landscape in a degree comparable to Claude's, and he advances upon Claude in that he secured these effects by means of color. In landscape on a smaller scale he rivaled Constable, and in his sense of the *intime* quality of interiors he is the equal of Chardin. He has the poetry of Giorgione, but it is a more homely poetry, less Arcadian, with less of the pathos of distance.

His weaknesses spring from the same source as his strength—his absorption in the life that is visible to the eye, his unreflectiveness, his incomparable sensuous charm. He has not the impersonality or quite the subtlety of Velasquez, nor the supreme economy of means, the restraint, the poignancy of human values, the mysticism of Rembrandt. He is less imaginative than Giorgione, less elevated than Titan, less dramatic than Tintoretto, less powerful than Michel Angelo or Cézanne, and less completely absorbed in the essential, to the neglect of all secondary matters, than Giotto. But purely as a plastic artist, he has greater command of means, greater variety of effect, and certainly a greater decorative quality than any other painter.

## CHAPTER V

### DEGAS

DEGAS (1834-1917) was one of the most active and potent figures in the art life of the time of the impressionists. He never shared their interest in the effects of sunlight on the color of natural objects as a thing in itself, nor did he adopt in its entirety the impressionists' technique. He belongs to that group principally because he shared their belief that the chief end of a painting is to attain design, and that all situations in life, no matter how trivial, have their own intrinsic qualities that can be rendered in plastic terms.

It is in his method of approach to the subject-matter that he is in some respects the most individual, as well as one of the strongest, of the group of impressionists. His attention was centered upon the events of everyday life, in which he saw and emphasized the ironic and sardonic. His varied and highly expressive line has never been excelled, and only a few men like the early Dutch painter Bosch, and later, Daumier, Goya, Glackens and Pascin, approach his degree of skill and power.

His line is rarely sharp or incisive. It is sometimes as heavy as Cézanne's in defining contours; usually the line is rendered in terms of color which is ragged at the edges, so that the drawing is very often accomplished by wavy edges of color. His design owes its strength to the infinite variety of patterns produced by the meeting of various objects or parts of the body, posed in unusual positions, generally tending toward the dramatic. The weakness of his design lies in the fact that the predominance of line relegated other important plastic elements, space and color, to comparatively subsidiary positions.

His patterns and his interest in the episodic were a perfect combination for the production of illustrations that penetrated to the essential psychological significance of the events of daily life. Nearly all of his pictures are trenchant, biting, sardonic comments upon ballet girls, laundresses, women getting into or out of bathtubs, people at café tables, race tracks, etc. The situations involve acts of life that most people have to perform,



but Degas accentuated the essential triviality of the acts. However, when we abstract from the subject-matter and turn our attention to his use of the plastic means, we find that he had a fine sense for composition: that he established the relations between objects which create powerful plastic forms. He was especially successful in the composing of individual units in a painting, say a group of dancers in a scene on the stage; when, however, there are several groups, he seemed to lack ability to unify these groups into a composition which is plastically whole.

The color in his oil paintings is usually dull, drab, dry, and he seems unable to effect harmonious combinations between even bright colors. His own consciousness of that fact led him to work mostly in pastel. In that medium he sometimes rises to great heights as a colorist by reason of the scintillating iridescence of brilliant colors used harmoniously, although he rarely succeeded in using color effectively in composing the picture into a unit of uniform strength. In some parts the color will be weaker either in quality or in carrying effect than in other parts, so that the general effect is rather of spots of color than a strong rhythmic flow which embraces all of the picture. His pastels have an animation and sparkle which is totally lacking in the majority of his oil paintings. His modeling in pastel is generally more successful: the three-dimensional quality, while light, is of sufficient solidity to achieve a degree of reality that goes well with the general lightness that pastel effects require.

These disadvantages in the use of color are offset to a considerable extent by the many effects obtained by the skilled use of his highly expressive line. The many and diverse uses to which he puts the line give rise to a series of formal relations, in almost any unit selected, so rich that those areas compare favorably with similar units in the work of men who used color more successfully. In pastel, where he could control the color better, he used it in connection with line to get a composite effect in which the color-function, while always subsidiary to the major function of the line, is positively contributory to the general effect of the particular form.

Degas's high place in art is determined chiefly by the character of his line and the great variety of specific effects which he was able to produce with it. Naturally, his line was especially adapted to the representation of movement, and in that he is not excelled by any other artist. But a still finer and more delicate use of line

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is that which portrays poised movement, and in this respect Velasquez was Degas's only serious competitor. The poised movement of Velasquez is much more important as an artistic creation than that of Degas because the means by which it is accomplished are more comprehensive and more subtly used. In Degas it is usually possible to see the very bend of line or combination of lines that renders the poised movement. The result, as a thing in itself, is quite equal to that of Velasquez, but we always feel it somewhat as a *tour de force*, which would be virtuosity in any man to whom it came less naturally and who could render it in less variety of forms than could Degas.

It may be said, therefore, that Degas belongs rather to the class of great illustrators than to the class of great artists represented by Renoir and Cézanne. He was too much occupied with showing the world the phases of life which provoked his ironic criticism to render broader effects representative of the deeper human values. In many of his works there is such an uneven degree of quality in the execution of parts of bodies, objects, etc., that plastic unity is destroyed.

Practically the only developments of impressionism that Degas employed to any extent are the distortion and simplification of objects by which they are rendered in their broad general terms, with comparatively little attention to detail. To a lesser extent he employed also the impressionistic method of using lighted color-areas. His distortions of the parts of the human body result in obliterated features and sometimes grotesqueness or monstrosity, but they enhance the plastic ensemble.

Degas created nothing that can be compared, in wealth of plastic forms or deep human values, with the work of either Renoir or Cézanne, but he did create a series of new forms which are his own, and in which there is an airy, light delicacy, grace and power that reveal him as an artist of high rank. No follower of Degas has ever succeeded in reproducing his plastic forms.



## CHAPTER VI

### CÉZANNE

CÉZANNE (1839-1906) began working at the time when impressionism was at its height, and the influences upon him were in large measure the same as the influences upon Renoir. Both men were impressionists in their technique and remained impressionists throughout their careers, even though each used the method in a distinctive and individual way.<sup>1</sup> Both Renoir and Cézanne were deeply influenced by Delacroix and Courbet. The first, but only fleeting, influence of Delacroix is seen in the romantic, dramatic subject-matter in Cézanne's earliest paintings. The profound lesson which he learned from Delacroix, and which lasted all his life, was the great effects obtainable from the structural and organic use of color. From Courbet, he absorbed the simplifications and vigorous painting of naturalistic objects, which, combined with the later influences of Michel Angelo, El Greco and Pissarro, determined the form taken by his whole-hearted devotion to the construction of relatively abstract design.

The early influence of Pissarro upon him was so strong that the first impressionist paintings by Cézanne could almost pass for Pissarro's of extraordinary vigor. He took over his entire technique—quality and kind of color, its use in juxtaposed spots varied with broad areas of color, and his manner of using light. His grasp of fundamentals, and his ability to form original and powerful designs, seem to have been innate, for they appear in his earliest work, long before he had developed his final and characteristic form. Consequently, his use of Pissarro's method resulted in paintings that were stronger than Pissarro's own, more solid, better organized by means of color. His better sense of line, color, mass and space in their purely plastic function makes a form stronger than that of any of his contemporary impressionists.

Cézanne's evolution into his own distinctive technique was a slow process because he was deficient in natural facility in the use of the brush. From the first he was clearly an independent

<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix, pp. 479-492.

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artist, but it was a long time before he could paint with the assurance of Renoir, and his early work lacks the finish and mastery of medium which is to be seen in Renoir from the start. The sense of effort and strain remains even in his mature style, which never attains to Renoir's unconscious ease and naturalness. Although Renoir's painting also represents a gradual progress toward his final form, his early pictures are much more complete in themselves than Cézanne's and do not so clearly represent experimental and tentative stages.

During the course of Cézanne's experimentation, the impressionistic technique is always much in evidence. The interest in color, the use of light to vivify the color in selected spots and also as a general illumination, are unmistakably in the impressionistic manner. But even before he had attained a degree of skill in the use of paint equal to Pissarro's, there is a noticeable advance in the dynamic power of the color in the design, and in its use to produce more convincing effects of three-dimensional reality.

In the analyses in the Appendix, the progress of Cézanne towards his fully characteristic later manner is treated in detail. His progress towards the use of a thinner impasto resulted in an increasing ability to render the effects of solidity in terms free from the sculptural tendency of his earlier thick paint. This thinner paint transformed the roughness of effect in his early work to a lightness and delicacy that involves no loss of strength. As his style becomes more characteristically his own, the ability to compose in terms of deep space increases, with great heightening of conviction and moving power. At the same time, there is a softening of contours. His line rarely becomes blurred as in Renoir, but it loses its earlier tendency to hardness and comparative isolation from the other elements, and comes to be realized more intimately in union with light and color, especially color. His composition departs from conventionality and flows rhythmically throughout the whole of the canvas. The shapes of the objects become less naturalistic and more arbitrarily subordinated to the requirements of design. This tendency to distortion of shape has always been the quality in Cézanne which aroused the scornful wonder of the inexperienced observer, and is chiefly responsible for the effort which is required to appreciate his painting at all. He has none of the charm which Renoir has for the superficial observer. Such an observer does not, of course, see the essential plastic virtues of Renoir, but he does see an immediately



pleasing lyric quality, while in Cézanne he is likely to see nothing familiar. Cézanne, in other words, is a connoisseur's painter.

Cézanne can be appreciated only after all considerations of naturalistic accuracy have been dismissed. His distinctive achievement was to establish a series of relationships in deep space between solid three-dimensional objects, so that their ensemble is a unified plastic design of great aesthetic power. This feeling for the dynamic relationships between objects and the ability to coördinate the resulting forms into a design involved a specific genius, which in the period of his maturity resulted in designs as original and as moving as those of Giotto. To achieve these designs he violated all conceptions of probability or possibility. Objects appear suspended in the air, in complete defiance of the law of gravitation, figures and faces are distorted into monstrosities. Both color and outline are treated as motives to be worked with as design requires, and in no sense as requirements laid down by the actual appearance of things in the real world. These distortions are to be found not only in the faces and other parts of the human body, but also in all the plastic means, including line, mass, space: they are fundamental to the planes themselves. These planes are changed from the normal in every conceivable way, and the new forms are built up by the interpenetration of these distorted planes, which represent the most basic plastic debt of Cézanne to El Greco. In all of his work there is a perceptible, a definite idea, which he himself called the *motif*. Naturalistic considerations in the representation of subject-matter were sacrificed to the desire to make lines, perspective, and space so fuse in planes of color that all the elements come into equilibrium. In other words, objects, deprived of their resemblance to real things, were merely the means used to integrate the plastic elements into new and distinctive forms.

The essential material for all his forms was color, and he built everything up out of color. His modeling is done by means of modulation of color and not by the usual method of variations of the same color to indicate the gradations of light by which in nature the curving surface of a solid body is shown. Cézanne used strokes of color, which give the essential effect of solidity, but in a form far removed from that of nature. The result is a richer plastic effect, with no loss of conviction. In modeling he also used light in the usual way as an additional means; but modulation with color is the essential characteristic, is distinctively his

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own method, and it shows the thoroughness with which he carried out his intention to utilize the prime material of painting, color, to the greatest possible extent. His manner of using color represents an originality and an economy of means comparable to Rembrandt's, and is perhaps even better than Rembrandt's, because color is in itself richer than chiaroscuro, it has more possibilities, and is more distinctively *the* material in the medium of painting. In the achievement of subtle effects by means of color he rivals Velasquez, though he was by far the lesser craftsman. He raises the functional quality of color to its supreme degree and thus carries the Venetian tradition to its consummation. Perspective, drawing, composition, and the creation of solid structure are all done chiefly by color. Even in his distortions, the line is either color itself or is so merged with color in a moving formal relation to adjacent colors as to make the drawing more powerful. The distorted planes in his best work consist of an equilibrium of colors fused into new forms which are Cézanne's very own. In these, color enters into fluid, rhythmic relations with all the other plastic elements, and organizes the painting by means of distinctive forms. This rhythmic interplay of color-forms is Cézanne's great achievement, and was never realized better by any other artist. Color animates everything, without any recourse to the moving power of illustration.

Cézanne's forms are essentially abstract, but they are achieved through the medium of subject-matter that has sufficient point of contact with the real world to establish relation with our funded experience of real things. For example, the hands in the "Portrait of Madame Cézanne" are obviously distorted and unnatural, but they recall human hands, in their essential and abstract quality, with a forceful, moving reality greater than any photographic imitation of hands could produce. In this power to give the feeling of the real while avoiding all literal realism, Cézanne vies with Rembrandt and Velasquez, in whose paintings there is the same realism without photography. More than either of these painters, Cézanne stripped away everything not absolutely essential, and through new technical means succeeded in giving that sense of profound fidelity to the deeper aspects of things, which is the characteristic of all great art.

Cézanne ranks with the greatest painters of all ages because, by the use of means purely plastic and by a new use of the most difficult of those means—color—he realized a form of the highest



conviction and power. In his elimination of everything not entirely necessary to design, he followed in the footsteps of Michel Angelo, Tintoretto and El Greco, whose distortions he applied to new purposes. From Velasquez, through the intermediation of Manet, he learned to simplify. But in him the whole tradition of simplification and distortion was merged with the impressionistic technique and became something radically new in the history of painting. His power is equal to Michel Angelo's, and is more effective because it is achieved by means entirely intrinsic to painting, instead of the suggestions derived from sculpture to be found even in the best of Michel Angelo's work. His landscapes have the majesty of Claude's, combined with a more austere, rugged force; they have an added purity because he dispenses with anything of even the degree of obviousness of Claude's atmosphere. His perception of the significant enables him to put into a simple still-life a monumental quality that makes Raphael's "Transfiguration" seem trivial.

Cézanne's shortcomings arise partly from the same source as his greatness and partly from his never wholly perfect command of his medium. As a painter he never rises to the greatest heights, those of Velasquez, Rembrandt, or Renoir. Cézanne's laborious efforts to force and coax paint to express his ideas and feelings are perceptible at all stages of his work. Even in his most mature paintings he sometimes lacked that command over paint which makes it seem that an artist can execute without apparent effort, which is the mark of the supreme craftsman. Another disadvantage is that his resolute adherence to essentials left him comparatively little interest in the sensuous charm that accompanies a specific decorative quality. In this respect he is inferior to all the greater Venetians, to Velasquez, to Renoir, and even to Rubens. This does not mean that his surfaces are at all bleak or barren, but there is not the wealth of decorative quality throughout every area of his pictures that there is, for example, in Giorgione's. In Renoir there is a similar, powerful plastic form made up of solid masses rhythmically arranged in deep space, but in addition we have a greater variety and richness of color-chords and a more ingratiating charm, such as exists in Giorgione and Titian. The example of these artists also shows that it is possible to have strength of plastic form in combination with a greater variety of human values than Cézanne presents to us, so that his purification of plastic form is not attained without loss. This defect is offset

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to a certain extent by the sensuous richness of the plastic forms themselves, in which the color is deeply integrated.

He was the equal of the greatest artists in making his forms embody the abstract feelings, the human values, that the objects and events of everyday life communicate. He rendered the essential qualities of those feelings stripped of the irrelevant and accidental, and endowed them with the pervasive mystery, power and charm that make them moving, vital, and beautiful.



## CHAPTER VII

### PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES (1824-1898) lived at the time of the impressionists, but in another world, one which kept his work free from their influences. His world was that of Giotto and Piero della Francesca, and he succeeded in putting into his oil painting considerable of the quality which gives frescoes a peculiar charm and force. His mural decorations, when looked at in an ensemble, as in the Hôtel de Ville at Amiens, are strongly reminiscent of both Giotto and Piero, but they are not imitations.

Puvis's work is distinctive in pattern, drawing, quality of color, and ability to bring the compositional units into harmonious relations. His feeling for space and his suave, smooth, skillful use of paint have rarely been excelled. In all of these respects his models were Giotto and Piero, though he was not the equal of either of them except in the use of paint and space-composition. His subjects lack the deep religious fervor of Giotto. He is more like Piero, especially in the use of cool color that goes well with the impersonality of his work. Much of this effect is due to the use of a delicate but deep blue in combination with other delicate colors, notably a fluffy white, and shades of lilac that have the fundamental feeling of blue. In his large mural decorations, the figures and other objects are composed with considerable of Giotto's ability to establish an easy, graceful flow from one figure to another, and from various groups to other groups. Compared to Giotto's, his drawing is weaker, less expressive of finer grades of movement, and it has more of the static quality of Piero; he was far, however, from being the equal of Piero in his drawing as a whole.

His compositions have usually a fine sense of balance, as well as a processional flow of one compositional group-unit into another that gives a fluid character to his general design. His drawing is light, delicate and graceful. His line, which at a distance looks sharp and incisive, is seen upon close inspection to be ragged in its contour, with color instead of sharp line functioning as the

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division between objects. His modeling of figures into a light three-dimensional solidity is well adapted to the delicacy of the general design. There is more departure from naturalistic representation than in the early frescoists, and in some objects this non-naturalistic character tends to the feeling of unreality. There is the classic, delicate quality of Poussin in many of Puvis's works.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POST-IMPRESSIONISTS

Van Gogh's (1853-1890) style was based upon the impressionistic technique, which he modified chiefly in matters of detail. He enlarged and greatly elongated the spots of color used by Monet into long narrow streaks, and applied them in visible brush-strokes somewhat in the manner of Manet and of Hals. He followed Manet too in the employment of broad areas of color, by which his more strictly impressionistic painting is diversified. His modeling of faces by perceptible brush-strokes is similar to that in Renoir's and Monet's work in the late seventies.

The personal note in Van Gogh's design, in which he departs most from the impressionistic manner, appears in his use of a figure or mass against a background contrasting with it in color and usually in manner of treatment. The figure or mass is almost always greatly simplified and distorted, with the brushing very apparent in the drawing of features and contour. The ribbon-like brush-strokes of bright color and with many variations in size and direction, make up a design of line and color. The contrasting background may be comparatively a monochrome containing a light-pattern or an ornamental design of colored figures, or it may be animated by a swirl or by contrasting areas of color. In any case, the contrast between the central mass or figure and the background as a whole produces a dramatic effect, to which the very dynamic quality of the ribbonlike streaks of color, the strikingly vivid and unnatural hues employed, and the character of the distortions, all contribute. The generally wavy, rhythmic line and the frequent sudden transitions from minute color-divisions to broad areas of unbroken color heighten the dramatic contrast. With these means, Van Gogh infuses a spirit of emotional tenseness into themes ordinarily placid or composed, and a feverish, almost a delirious, quality into situations intrinsically dramatic.

His color is bright, rich, and juicy. It lacks the structural value of Renoir's and Cézanne's, and it does not function so effectively in organizing the painting in terms of color. It is always





Van Gogh

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 492





Manet

Louvre





Modigliani

Barnes Foundation





Gauguin

Barnes Foundation



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rhythmic, but the rhythms are never so rich and varied as in Renoir and Cézanne, and the total compositional effect of the color is rather light. Although in Van Gogh's best work there is a definite design, the obviousness of the means relegates him to a lower status than that of his greatest contemporaries. His designs are generally flat, and his modeling only approaches three-dimensional solidity.

Van Gogh's success in achieving a form that is original, animated, and appealing, entitles him to a high place in the painting of the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. His influence upon subsequent painters has been considerable, especially in the employment of daring color-contrasts both in the realization of design, and in the expression of intense personal emotion. Matisse and Soutine owe much to him in both respects, even though they used his accomplishments as a point of departure and not as a model for imitation.

Gauguin's (1851-1903) earliest pictures are very much in the impressionistic manner of Pissarro, under whose tuition he started his career. Later he gave up the divisionistic method and used color in broad uniform areas slightly modulated with light and varied with occasional spots of contrasting colors. This is the method of his Tahiti pictures, which represent him in his characteristic manner.

The essential features of his perfected method are a skilled use of broad areas of single colors placed in contrast with each other, a quite individual color of an appealing sensuous quality, and a good utilization of space. The formal relations thus established constitute composition of a high order, but the general effect partakes more of the nature of decoration than of a successful merging of the structural and decorative elements into a substantial plastic form. Much of the popular appeal of his Tahiti pictures is due to the exotic character of subject-matter, in which the romantic surroundings and the facial expressions are instrumental to a facile and rather cheap mysticism. His drawing is rather sharply linear and only partially merged with color. The general effect of his figures is static even when they are supposed to be in movement; this static character is intentional, in the interest of design. His modeling is accomplished by rather obvious use of color in flat areas so that figures have very little three-dimensional feeling. That treatment enters well into the general flatness



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and decorative nature of his design and provides a fitting embodiment for the subject-matter of primitive, dark-skinned, semi-nude people. He makes an effective use of the dark people by placing upon them bright and gayly patterned sarongs, the colors in which have an appealing sensuous quality. In his drawing of figures and objects, there are distortions of color, line and light that give them positive values as plastic forms but differentiate them considerably from naturalistic appearances.

Gauguin's paintings may be considered as essentially decorations which have a considerable degree of artistic significance by reason of the successful use of mass, color and space. His forms are slight compared to those of his contemporaries, Cézanne and Van Gogh, and there is a suggestion of affectation in both the nature of the subject-matter and its plastic treatment.

The debt of **Maurice Denis** to Gauguin is shown in his use of broad areas of color which enter into relations with each other to give color-forms of great decorative value. He modified Gauguin's general practice in various ways, but the basic principle of color-contrast remains. Denis sometimes treats one of the broad areas of uniform color with small spots of white in the manner of the pointillists. Figures are rendered by smaller areas of very light and unusual tones, such as light greens, pinkish mother-of-pearl, lilac, lemon-yellow, etc., placed in relation to the broad color-areas and to objects rendered in bright but less exotic colors. The repetition of these contrasting units in various parts of the canvas, makes a series of appealing and distinctive patterns.

His drawing, like Gauguin's, is deliberately static. The element in his work which is lacking in Gauguin's is the use of accentuated long stretches of line, defining the contours of figures which have a classic feeling merged with a fine, graceful, delicate porcelain-like quality. The classic and exotic-colored figures placed in finely conceived spatial relations to each other and to the broad areas of bright but more conventional color, constitute his characteristic plastic form.

Like Gauguin's, his work is essentially decorative. It is more varied in color by reason of the strange quality of the tones, is given a more linear quality by the use of long expanses of sharply incisive line, and is made more brilliant by floods of intense light. This combination of color and line with light gives to figures a three-dimensional solidity extraordinarily delicate but quite real

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from the plastic standpoint. Matisse is indebted somewhat to Denis for the quality of his color but he carried it much further in both its structural and its functional uses.

**Bonnard** uses color successfully to form individual designs in the canvas and to organize the painting. His color-forms are enhanced in both their structural and decorative functions by linear designs made up of the various objects in the scenes represented. His work is impressionistic more in the manner of Renoir than that of Monet; that is, juxtaposed color-spots are used only as an incident to serve a particular purpose and do not dominate the entire canvas. These color-spots are used in connection with broad areas of nearly uniform color modified by streaks of light to give a richer and more varied effect. His color has never the depth nor the rich, sensuous quality of that of Renoir, Monet, Sisley or Pissarro. Sometimes it tends toward the garish, but it always has a delicacy and force that make him one of the important, though minor, colorists of the age. His drawing is done by ragged, irregular lines of color that indicate rather than define the parts of the body or object portrayed. His best results are in small compositions representing interiors, and to these he succeeds in giving an *intime* feeling which has both power and charm.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE IMPRESSIONIST TRADITION IN AMERICA

THE most important of the American painters who worked in the manner of the impressionists are Glackens, Prendergast, and Lawson, each of whom contributed something personal to the tradition.

Lawson took over the impressionists' technique in all its phases—divided tones, direct effect of sunlight on objects, atmosphere, and the painting of landscape in which objects are treated chiefly from the standpoint of design. His technique follows that of Monet but his drawing is more rugged, his color has a deeper and richer sensuous quality, and it organizes the painting more effectively. These modifications make his best work stronger than that of Monet from the standpoint of general design. It has the lyric quality that one feels in natural landscape but this is not as deep nor as delicate as in Sisley, nor has his color the limpid, fluid delicacy of Sisley's. Compared to Pissarro's work, his is weaker in drawing, in color, in originality and in general design.

While his best results are comparable to the best of Monet's, they lack the latter's originality and the great variety of color-effects achieved by the use of sunlight and divided tones. Lawson's finer feeling for the plastic function of color is shown by his more accurate placing of deeper colors in areas where they function more strongly in effecting a general harmony throughout the canvas. He is open to criticism because of the comparative lack of originality in the use of the impressionistic technique; consequently his work is suggestive of formula painting. The sameness of the technique becomes rather monotonous, although he used it successfully in the painting of the most diverse conditions in nature: the fresh bloom of early spring, the hot haze of summer, the cold steely blue and white of winter. In the treatment of each of these themes, he succeeds in conveying the spirit of the landscape in the terms of a good design. The successful use of rich, appealing color, a good feeling for space, and the ability to make an ordered sequence of objects in the composition contribute to a plastic design are Lawson's own achievements. Judged by

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his work prior to 1918 he is by far the most important American landscape painter up to the present time.

The chief characteristics of the work of **Glackens** are his expressive drawing, a fine sense of the drama of the events of everyday life, an extraordinary feeling for color, and great command over the medium of paint. In all of these respects, he bears comparison with the great leaders of impressionism. His early work was done chiefly under the influence of Manet, and while it is much less bright in color than his later work, it reveals his fine control of line, color and composition in space. The later influence of Renoir was so strong and so clearly perceptible that superficial critics have dismissed him with a statement that he is an imitator of Renoir. But that facile judgment leaves out of account the reasons for the influence, and the differences that are clearly distinguishable. Psychologically, Glackens is more akin to Renoir than any other painter of our age. Both men were born artists and they painted as naturally, as easily, and as inevitably as they breathed; each had a keen interest in the events of everyday life and had the ability to select and portray the picturesque elements with their intrinsic drama; each had an extraordinarily penetrating eye, a rare feeling for color, and the ability to put those colors in harmonious relations with each other. There the similarity between the two men ceases; but it would be impossible to have men of such similar personal characteristics produce paintings that were not alike in certain respects.

With an artistic endowment which enabled him to realize the plastic function of color, Glackens was naturally more attracted to Renoir than to any other painter. Just as Renoir selected from Rubens and Fragonard certain plastic elements which he used as points of departure for his own forms, so has Glackens selected the color-forms of Renoir and put them to other uses. Nobody who knows the work of both men could fail to recognize the fundamental difference of those color-forms, and the personal and distinctive character of Glackens's results.

Glackens, like Goya, Daumier and Degas, was a great illustrator, and, as with them, the information he gives is always rendered by a choice of plastic means that conveys the essential feeling of the situation without resort to literary or sentimental props. His black-and-white work is quite on a par with that of Goya, Daumier and Degas in expressive power. It has also an



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individual quality and often an added strength because of the simplification which makes his drawing of almost epigrammatic terseness. In fact, it is so forceful and so expressive that for the past twenty years many of the best illustrators have imitated or adopted the drawing which Glackens originated. Any account of a painter's work which left out the function of illustration in a painting would miss entirely the quality which individualizes the work of many great artists, including Giotto and Michel Angelo. Glackens's work has an obvious illustrative character, but it is so firmly placed in a setting of other plastic values of a high grade that the painting becomes a work of art in which illustration is only an element. The chief plastic means which converts his subject-matter from illustration to a more comprehensive plastic form is color. His color is the equal of Renoir's in its sensuous quality, it is just as effectively used in drawing, and functions well in organizing the picture. What makes Glackens inferior to Renoir is that he has never been able to use color structurally to give the solidity that makes Renoir's figures so real; consequently, his color-forms are not so active as Renoir's in establishing the dynamic relations between volumes in deep space.

He realizes forms that represent the highly successful merging of all the plastic elements—line, light, color, space. He has ability of a rare order to make those forms embody the fundamental essentials of the events of everyday life. His work is impersonal in the sense that Velasquez's work was impersonal; that is, he selects the picturesque and renders it without comment of his own. He is free from Degas's ironic representation of the triviality of events, and has none of Daumier's tendency to emphasize the comic or absurd, nor Goya's penchant for showing human traits that bespeak meanness or pretense. He shows with detachment the essential picturesqueness and humanity of the events represented, and his only comment upon life is that it is pleasant to live in a beautiful world.

**Prendergast's** (1862–1924) paintings have such obvious colorful charm rendered by means of so striking a technique, that the decorative quality is likely to obscure the formal structure. He is, however, an artist of high rank who has succeeded better than most of his contemporaries in making an effective design triumph over obvious technique and incidental subject-matter.

The origin of his method is found in the impressionists, Monet,

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Pissarro and Sisley, in Cézanne, and in the pointillist's application of numerous small color-spots all over the canvas. Upon the latter method, Prendergast founded a technique which differs materially from that of any of the other impressionists. He so modified, amplified and increased the power of color-spots that the effect is totally different from that of any of his prototypes. The manner in which his colors relate themselves gives rise to a great variety of formal relations that constitute his individual note.

His drawing is extraordinarily broad and loose. Contours are ragged, the bodies of figures are often blurred, but there is a fine unity to all this broadness and looseness in making the distorted figures function as both masses and color in the design. His interest in design led him to deprive figures of all their naturalistic associations, so that they have only slight resemblance to human beings. Faces are mere circular splashes of color—sometimes solid but occasionally varied with spots that may be interpreted as suggestions of features. The distortions are in such extreme degree that sometimes a child is larger than a donkey; a woman almost as tall as a tree; a dog a mere juxtaposition of a few vague, dark lines and color-spots, with a leg extending off into the distance like a branch of a tree; occasionally there is a mass so vague that one cannot say whether it represents a tree or a figure. The gown of a figure will be painted with a brilliant orange and the face a splash of the same color. Yet these figures are plastic creations of reality and power.

The most potent factor in Prendergast's work is color. No painter ever had a finer feeling for its sensuous quality or used it in a greater variety of pure colors. It is rich, juicy, and glowing, and he applies it in daring contrasts with harmonious results. It is this staccato use of light and color that makes his color-forms powerful and distinctive. It is not color in isolation from the design: by its very manner of use it succeeds in making an organic whole of the compositional units. Renoir also occasionally used similar bright colors interspersed with light in a sort of staccato color-movement all over the canvas.

Space, also, Prendergast manipulates to the end of design. His control of perspective is so great that when the purposes of design demand, he renders the infinity of distance as subtly as Titian or Velasquez, although in an entirely different manner. In a group of objects, the space between the components enters into relation with the color and line to make a design that is formally related to



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the other units; in this respect he is often quite the equal of Seurat. His paintings have the general effect of flatness principally because there is little attempt at modeling faces or bodies.

The feeling which Prendergast puts into his work is that of a child with penetrating vision who sees naïvely and is able to express its simplicity and naïveté in a design in which beautiful color is an outstanding characteristic. That childlike naïveté is not an affectation but the natural unaffected expression of the artist's temperament as revealed by his whole life. In his joyful appreciation of the beautiful things of life he remained a child up to the time of his death. To express that individual vision by the skilled use of plastic means represents one of the forms of consummate art.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MANET TRADITION IN AMERICA

By far the greatest amount of popular painting done during the last generation has been a repetition of several great traditions, mostly the Dutch and Spanish, especially as given a modern version by Manet. It has been chiefly an attenuation of the traditions by academicians totally uninspired, with nothing to say but, nevertheless, able to find a market for their wares with an indiscriminating public. To that category belong Benjamin West, Gilbert Stuart, the Peales, Sully and similar artistic non-entities of the past. The principal reason for their popular success is that mere craftsmen with a certain amount of technical skill can reproduce with considerable fidelity the obvious superficial technique of great artists. Consequently, the mere facility in imitation by means of the brush has been current as the art of painting. This lamentable condition has filled our public galleries, the art academies, and many noted private collections with paintings that are totally devoid of artistic value. They vary in quality of surfaces only, whether Sargent, Henri, or Seyffert is the particular manufacturer.

There have been, however, several painters of considerable talent who have been able to make a fairly personal and competent use of the great Dutch and Spanish traditions. The two outstanding American painters of that character in the past and present generations are Thomas Eakins and George Luks.

Eakins (1844-1916) was essentially a school-painter who created nothing that can be said to have been truly original; but he had such a fine feeling for composition, for the relation of objects to each other, and such command of the medium of paint, that his works are personal expressions even though they are not creations of the first rank. The best of his work is represented in the portrait of "Dr. Agnew." (Analysis, page 497.) This illustrates well his ability to render convincing solidity, poised movement, and effective space-relations with great skill. It shows the essen-



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tials of the subject, including character and dignity. His limited palette in this picture gives the effect of economy and subtlety, but in his average work it seems merely to indicate poverty of resources. In the majority of his paintings, the tight drawing, the inadequate feeling for color, and the stereotyped quality of themes, relegate him to the status of the skilled academician.

**Luks** works mostly in the Dutch tradition, and his most successful results have been in the realm of *genre*-painting. The best of these latter have a degree of power that compare with that of Metsu and Dou. His palette is restricted, usually to various shades of brown and white, with an occasional note of blue or red. This limited range of color he handles with great skill both in regard to harmonious color-combinations and as contributing to the effect of reality and power in the painting as a whole. But his feeling for color is quite limited, and when he attempts to increase his palette the results are disastrous to the picture and to the color-relations.

He is represented at his best in the painting "The Blue Churn." (Analysis, page 497.) This picture is Rembrandtesque in its chiaroscuro and in the placing of a figure against a background of only slightly different color-value. It shows his use of Manet's brushing to emphasize essentials and avoid undue literalism, and to render the linear and tonal values of the subject with simplicity and vigor. It exhibits his command of composition, not in any extraordinary degree of force or originality, but to an extent sufficient to achieve a large measure of plastic quality.

In his less successful pictures, the balance of elements is disturbed. His ability to produce striking effects by brushwork much in the manner of Hals, and to some extent of Manet, has led him to overwork that element so that many of his paintings savor too strongly of virtuosity to be classed as great art. In general, he shows very little feeling for either the quality of color or the placing of it in the canvas to secure harmonious results. It is usually superficial and tends toward being mere filling-in between contours of objects. Textiles rarely have the basic feeling of the qualities which make them what they are.

In the majority of his work there is an obvious sentimentality rendered by specious means, which gives a quality of cheapness. However, his expressive line used in connection with color and

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light give his drawing an element of strength and power which saves practically all of his work from being classed as mere virtuosity or sentimentality. His command of paint enables him to put such quality in many of the objects depicted that, abstracted as units, they are definite and personal creative forms of a high order. But too often this finely executed unit will be in relation to another object in which virtuosity and sentimentality are the chief characteristics. The result is that this divergence in power creates a disbalance between the constituent elements so that there is a lack of integration of the units into an organic whole.

The work of Henri represents technical skill without artistic creativeness, but it has an obvious flash which his followers have taken over and attenuated to even more complete artistic insignificance.

Henri's painting is in the Manet tradition of broad brush-strokes, but these are isolated from their meaning and made the main theme unsupported by any quality in the use of the other plastic means. It consists almost entirely of the kind of portraiture characterized by the conventional placing of figures against backgrounds varying from contrasting colors to those close in value to the ones in the figure. The background and the figure are never conceived as parts of an organic whole, so that his canvases are practically two pictures. Superficially, the effect of his work is striking, but analysis reveals nothing substantial except brush-strokes: the line, drawing, color and space have little or no relation to real art. In his color there is not a vestige of artistic feeling. It is used in accordance with the Maratti color-system, which prescribes a set of formulas for color-relations: this represents the height of mechanical academicism, from which individual feeling and expression are excluded. The result is that Henri's color is superficial, almost devoid of sensuous appeal, and without organic function either in building up the masses or in unifying the composition.

These plastic deficiencies are heightened by an obvious illustrative appeal, which takes the form of character-interpretation rendered by plastically illegitimate methods: the features of the face are painted in broad masses of colors which refuse to coalesce into an effective ensemble. There is usually an obvious peculiarity in the kind of clothing, or a twist to the face, together with a literal use of line or spot of color that is equivalent to decorative



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photography instead of expression. His manner and methods have been taken over by a host of younger men, including Bellows and Randall Davey, and have become a fixed academic form. This has been capitalized by skillful technicians to produce a great number of portraits and other paintings which embody popular substitutes for art.

BOOK V  
CONTEMPORARY PAINTING





## CHAPTER I

### THE TRANSITION TO CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

IN the chapter on "The Transition to Modern Painting" is mentioned the fact that the distinctive note in the painting of our own day is the development of interest in design as something comparatively independent of the ostensible subject of the painting. Almost all modern painting shows the influence of impressionism, especially as that movement was shaped and brought to its consummation by Renoir and Cézanne. In the work of both of these artists, the interest in achieving design primarily through the medium of color is paramount, but the interest in color takes a different form in the two men. Renoir's color is more varied, brighter, more sensuously charming and more decorative. In Cézanne it is more restrained and is used more in the interest of solidity or mass. But in both artists it assumes throughout the canvas a functional power to effect composition in a degree unequaled in the history of painting. The abstraction of color and its emphasis as the most potent of all the instruments of design is thus due to the researches of these two men.

In the evolution of their techniques, Renoir and Cézanne adopted methods that came from Velasquez, Hals, Goya and Courbet, through Manet's simplifications and generalizations. These latter were achieved principally by the broad brush-strokes that enabled Manet to give the essential quality of things, stripped of adventitious matter, and in a form that added a new note to general design. The concentration on the essential visible reality, which we saw to be the distinctive contribution of Velasquez, was thus revived and made a part of the living tradition of the time. It still further assisted in the work of making an independent non-naturalistic design, which should also reveal penetratingly the nature of things. Manet's method of using his brush had comparatively little direct influence upon Renoir and Cézanne, but Manet's contribution as a whole was in solution in most of the painting of the time, and it constantly reappears in the work of subsequent painters. Unfortunately, his brushwork survives also as an academic *cliché*, as in Henri and his tradesmen-followers,



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while his form as a whole is caricatured and commercialized by such portrait-manufacturers as Sargent.

We have already summed up the details of the advance made by Renoir and Cézanne upon the impressionistic painting which constituted their point of departure. In them, impressionism was further fertilized by all the great traditions of the past, and, taken together, they represent the highest development of plastic form. Simplification and distortion are more obvious in Cézanne's work than in Renoir's, and this fact has led to the view, at present much in vogue among superficial critics, that Cézanne represents a stage further in advance than Renoir in the progress towards the goal of a pure art. Such a view is due partly to an assumption which is false, and partly to insensitive observation. The assumption is that which has been given currency by the advocates of cubism and other art-forms, namely, that pure art involves a complete breach with reality, that plastic values are *totally* detached from human values. We have already seen the falsity of this assumption, and it will be further indicated in the discussion of cubism. The critics' fault in observation is that of failing to see in Renoir a more complex and profound originality than in Cézanne. The obvious surface-characteristics of Cézanne's works lend themselves to detection by academic critics, and imitation by academic painters, more readily than do the complicated fundamental characteristics of Renoir. Cézanne's distortions, the simplicity of his compositions, and the comparatively limited range of his palette—all these are easily seen and mimicked; but these things are far from explaining his power. Cézanne's greatness depends upon the use of color to achieve his peculiar effects of convincing massiveness, spaciousness, and compositional relations. To appreciate these, it is necessary to be able to abstract color and discern its function, its structural and organizing power; alleged appreciation not based upon such discernment is plain illusion and self-deception. But where the ability to grasp such color-values exists, there will also be ability to see in Renoir's paintings greater wealth of color-relationships, based upon the use of an infinite variety of shades and modulations with light. The color-forms in Renoir's canvases are far richer and more numerous than in those of any painter before or since. The difference between Renoir and Cézanne is this: Cézanne concentrated his efforts upon a much narrower range of problems; he attained a quite individual strength, but he became something much nearer





Sisley

Barnes Foundation





Lawson

Barnes Foundation





Glackens

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 495





Glackens

Barnes Foundation



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a specialist than Renoir. The specialist is, of course, more advanced in his particular province than a man of broader activities, but he is not therefore more original. It is true that Cézanne was extraordinarily original in his own sphere, but Renoir's originality was the more universal, subtle, and inimitable. Critics desirous of showing Renoir as at a disadvantage compared with Cézanne point to Cézanne's more numerous imitators among painters of the last decade or two, and assert that he has had more influence upon subsequent artists than Renoir. To any one with the slightest knowledge of history, the fallacy of judging the fertility of a man's work by its influence on the members of the generation just following his own will be apparent. The truth is that any profound or far-reaching originality requires for its understanding and use more than the very few years that have elapsed since Renoir's and Cézanne's activities.

The art of painting as it emerges from the hands of Renoir and Cézanne has in its possession as never before two all-important principles. First, the principle of pure design, embodying the values of human experience but not tied down to a literal reproduction of the situations in which these values are found in ordinary life. Second, the principle of color as the most essential of all the plastic elements, the means most entirely intrinsic to the medium of paint. This latter principle means, pragmatically, that effects of mass, composition, space, drawing, are most moving aesthetically when rendered in terms of color. Upon this foundation rests all that is truly significant and important in contemporary art.

Factors contributing to the development of modern design are found also in the work of Gauguin and Van Gogh. Other very important sources of inspiration are negro sculpture, in the case of Picasso, Modigliani and Soutine; and the art of Persia, India, China and Japan, in the case of Matisse and his disciples.

In Gauguin, there reappear the broad areas of color which are to be found in Manet, but with a different effect. The areas are broader, more purely decorative and do not show Manet's characteristic modification by perceptible brushwork. In Manet the design is intended much more to render the essential natural quality of what is depicted, while in Gauguin the forms are less expressive and they function more obviously as means to a design which is much more nearly mere pattern. This undoubtedly makes Gauguin a less important artist, but it also made his pictures fertile in suggestions for the painters who followed him. In



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Gauguin's general exotic quality and in his unusual color-contrasts, there is an anticipation of the color-scheme which was later used with more subtlety, variety, and power by Matisse.

In Van Gogh, we see the exaggeration of the color-division of the impressionists into long, narrow, ribbonlike streaks of color which give a general animation to the canvas and brightness to the color itself, in addition to making a specific design in which line and color fuse. In this respect, Van Gogh's painting is more expressive, less merely decorative, than Gauguin's; but a similar step is taken towards the isolation of design, and the decorative motive is also present. The strikingly unnatural shades of color and the distortions of line and mass are steps in the same direction, and these, together with the other characteristics of Van Gogh's painting, have been utilized freely by contemporary painters.

Negro sculpture has enriched contemporary painting to such an extent that a brief discussion of it is necessary. In the early periods of Greek sculpture figures were conceived as combinations of back, front, and side bas-reliefs. The achievement of complete plastic freedom was a late exploit, which arrived after the great period of Greek sculpture had passed. It was at all times complicated by the motive of representation, so that the arrangement of masses, of head, trunk and limbs, which would have made the most effective plastic ensemble, was rarely found. Literature, in other words, stood in the way of plastic form. With negro sculpture, the literary motive was absent and the artist strove to distribute his masses in accord with the requirements of a truly sculptural design. There is no suggestion of the bas-relief: the figures are three-dimensional through and through. Its freedom from anything adventitious or meaningless gives negro art a sculptural quality purer than that of the best Greek periods and also of Renaissance sculpture, which is Greek in a modern guise. In this respect, negro sculpture is quite the equal of Egyptian sculpture of the best periods.

Greek statues have had enormous influence on the whole course of painting since the Renaissance, and the pictures in which this influence is most apparent, for example, those of Leonardo, represent in a double sense a mongrel art. They are imitations in painting of another art, and this other art is in itself hybrid, a cross between pure sculpture and flat representation. Hence the confusion of values in Leonardo and all who showed the influence of his example. This confusion was not incompatible with consider-

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able achievement, since even Renoir is clearly within the classic Renaissance tradition, but it has unduly limited the range of possible plastic effects.

Negro art, in exhibiting a form which is in the fullest sense sculptural, has enforced a sharper distinction between the possibilities inherent in painting and sculpture, respectively, and it has also put at the disposal of painting a new source of inspiration. It is not a confusion of values that a painter should find inspiration in another art: the confusion arises when he directly imitates the methods of that art. Leonardo's solid forms are such an imitation, but the use of negro *motifs* in the work of Matisse, Modigliani, or Soutine is not. The latter do not attempt to realize the three-dimensional qualities of negro statues: what is taken over is rendered in the terms proper to painting, and so has nothing of the mongrel quality which is to be found in the contemporary revivals of Renaissance art. Matisse, Soutine and Modigliani render the essential feeling, the spirit of negro art and give it force in a new setting.

The attempt to use sculptural *motifs* or suggestions in painting may be quite unsuccessful, or may produce an effect entirely other than that intended, as in cubism. Cubistic pictures, far from possessing the characteristics which the word "cubistic" would properly imply, generally tend to go toward the other extreme of utter flatness. The great success of Lipchitz in applying the cubistic principles to sculpture suggests that the peculiar type of emphasis of selected planes, advocated by Picasso, Braque, and their followers, is a valid procedure in its proper sphere, however much of a fiasco it has been in painting. When suggestions supplied by sculpture are employed with due consideration for real and fundamental problems of painting, especially with an eye to the possibilities of color, as in the work of Soutine, the result is a very moving plastic form of which nothing in the previous history of painting is an anticipation.



CHAPTER II  
CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

IN 1904 a group of Cézanne's followers established in Paris the *Salon d'Automne* and stimulated a public interest which has relegated academic painting to an insignificant place in cultivated French life. A second and more liberal salon, the *Indépendents*, which was started a few years later, showed other important influences besides those of Cézanne. A third, the *Salon des Tuileries*, still more comprehensive in its influences, had its first successful exhibition in 1923. These three salons have determined all that is vital and important in contemporary painting throughout the world.

What interested the insurgents of twenty years ago was Cézanne's development of a form that had freed itself to an unheard-of extent from the representative values of subject-matter. The foundation of his form was the impressionists' practice of using color regardless of the natural tones of the objects portrayed: color combined with light was distributed all over the canvas so that a homogeneous color-mass replaced the old-fashioned representation of foreground, middle-distance and background. The method resulted in relatively flat painting and made color function in tying the compositional units together into an organic whole. It achieved, by a different method, an approach to the color-power which only a few great artists of the past, the Venetians, Rubens, Poussin, Delacroix, had possessed.

Cézanne's treatment of subject-matter led some of his followers to believe that painting could be purified and refined into abstract forms by abolishing all representation of natural objects. Picasso went to the extreme of conceiving objects as a series of planes and he painted these planes so that only sections of objects were visible in angular and cubic shapes. The practice spread rapidly and was defended by a system of absurd psychological and metaphysical doctrines that impressed unreflecting painters and critics. A clever London newspaper-writer, Mr. Clive Bell, surrounded the cubists' doctrine with a quasi-scientific set of high-sounding but meaningless statements in a book that served its propagandic

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purpose in good journalistic fashion. Mr. Bell's successful coup in thus giving currency to counterfeit thinking and counterfeit art was a circus performance which the late P. T. Barnum would have respected.

In 1913 cubism invaded America through the Armory Exhibition in New York. Its advent was brilliant in the sense of Goethe's remark that "there is no great art in being brilliant, if one respects nothing." It was a promoter's adventure backed by organized capital and the usual staff of salaried propagandists and press-agents. Its intrinsic capital consisted of the fact that the paintings offered a fresh, vivid impression in the name of art, at a time when creation was at its lowest level. The combination of circumstances influenced most of the young and a number of the older unstable painters to the extent that cubism in various degrees of purity flourished in independent exhibitions for a number of years. The American academician, Arthur B. Davies, preached the doctrine and helped to popularize it by adding angles and cubes to his regular formula for Botticelli-like nudes. The practical result was that a new academy, cubism, supplanted the one which the impressionists had maintained for the previous twenty years.

Sufficient time has passed to view cubism in retrospect and to evaluate it as an art-form and as an influence. Picasso and Braque put considerable aesthetic power into cubistic paintings, but it is doubtful if that power is not due to something independent of both the principles and the technique. The idea of abstract form divorced from a clue, however vague, of its representative equivalent in the real world, is sheer nonsense. In cubistic paintings that move us aesthetically there are always sufficient representative indications, as well as reliance upon other and traditional resources of painting, to stir up something familiar in our mass of funded experience. In these cases, the cubist technique functions psychologically precisely as do the distortions of El Greco, Renoir and Cézanne; that is, the representative element in all of those distortions contributes to the total effect. The nearest a purely cubist painting ever gets to the aesthetic forms that make up a complete painting, is good composition and novel color-forms, and those elements are never sufficient to constitute a satisfactory painting. The very great majority of cubistic paintings have no more aesthetic significance than the pleasing pattern in an Oriental rug.

A more important and constructive influence that came from the insurgent group in France is that of Matisse. He was never



tempted to seek the metaphysical abstract that led Picasso out of the paths of the great traditions of painting. Matisse, like Cézanne, has always been interested in the real world as the source of a plastic instrument that would enable him to recombine selected aspects or phases of human experience into a form which was something new, a thing in itself, with its own independent existence. He began with using certain technical devices, notably distortions, which Cézanne invented, and he carried them to further extremes in making them constructive factors in a new design. Subject-matter was minimized: it was merely the foundation stone upon which to build lines of extraordinary plastic power, and color of unusual compositional significance. In other words, Matisse followed Renoir's and Cézanne's practice in creating plastic forms of structural integrity. Where Picasso abstracted an element in a situation, Matisse dealt with the whole situation as it exists in reality. The error in Picasso's cubistic excursions is that he ignores the fundamental psychological fact that *continuity* is the essential feature of perception. It is as absurd to say that planes or sections of cubes represent the reality of objects as—to quote an observation of William James—to contend that our perception of a river is of spoonfuls or bucketfuls of water. In short, Picasso dealt with irrational abstractions that led him into a *cul-de-sac*, while Matisse dealt with concrete realities that expand continually into unlimited fields.

The tendency in present-day painting is away from the abstract and toward the utilization of situations of everyday life as a means of individual expression of universal human values. The impressionism of Claude Monet is scarcely in evidence, but the influences of Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Matisse, all of whom had their origins in impressionism, are almost universal in one or more of their phases. To these influences have been added the decorations and distortions found in the arts of India and Persia, and especially in negro sculpture. Certain practices of cubism—for example, the interpenetration and accentuation of planes—have been generalized in the new manner of emphasizing spacial relations of naturalistic objects in the composition. The primitive element which Rousseau le Douanier adapted to new ends is also apparent in the work of some of the contemporaries. These various influences have determined the exotic, the distorted, the primitive effects which have stirred the wrath of our fetish-worshipping academicians. What they have urged against contempo-

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rary paintings is duplicated in every essential point in what their prototypes of 1875 published about many paintings now considered to be among the best in the Louvre.

The canvases of the contemporary painters are filled with units actively constructive in the general design, and all the plastic elements are distorted for obviously specific purposes. The fresh and bright colors which cubism tabooed are almost universal, though there is little or no literal rendering of the natural colors of objects. Color, distributed all over the canvas, composes the painting; it replaces foreground, middle-distance and background with a homogeneous color-mass that makes perspective itself chiefly color. The general tendency is to sacrifice everything toward the achievement of design. Decoration is rampant and so are obvious human values, as is inevitable when painting is expressive and when its subject-matter is the objects and events of the real world. Nothing of the importance or significance of Renoir or Cézanne has appeared, although several men have shown a form in process of development that may reach the importance and strength of the best of Picasso and Matisse. In the limited space of this book, only a few of the many good contemporary painters can be mentioned. An attempt will be made, therefore, to select for discussion some of the artists whose work may be considered as representative of the tendencies that make up the new tradition.



## CHAPTER III

### MATISSE

MATISSE derives from the impressionists but he has so far departed from both their technique and their effects that he may be considered as in a class apart. His work is a continuation of the Cézanne tradition that the fundamental plastic value is design, irrespective of naturalistic rendering of subject-matter. This fact is the key to an understanding of his work, which may be best approached by considering how he departed from Cézanne's form.

His earlier work shows the technique of the impressionists in the juxtaposition of small spots of color, but afterward he depended more upon the contrasts of broad color-areas somewhat similar to those in Gauguin's latest work. Matisse's color has an exotic, non-naturalistic character that distinguishes all his mature work. His reds, greens, blues, oranges, may appear garish or strident when looked at in isolation, but as he relates them to each other, there emerge new and distinct color-forms which reveal him as one of the greatest colorists. To understand and appreciate him it is necessary to study the development of his forms through the medium of his technique.

Examples of his early painting show an application of color in spots predominantly small but differing in size, shape and direction, with only vague indications of subject-matter. (Analyses, pages 498-502.) The method is highly successful in giving the effect of rugged and original solidity to objects, and in making a design of aesthetically moving color-relations. The novelty, variety and power of these color-relations are the keystone of the design, but by no means its only characteristics; the other elements, line, modeling, space, etc., enter into the design, though all of them, except line, are rather a setting than of fundamental importance. These relations form rhythms which enter into the composition, serve as an indication of perspective, and are united with lines of a wavy character, greatly varied in size, shape and direction, to make a series of designs within designs. Everything is so abstract that it is often impossible to determine the precise

nature of subject-matter, or to say whether there is perspective in the sense of infinite depth or whether there is a screen just back of the objects in the foreground. But in all cases the quality of the colors and their relations to line and space make a very effective plastic form.

Cézanne's influence was the dominant one in Matisse's researches in color and in the achievement of design. (Analysis, page 498, Landscape No. 73.) Distortions reminiscent of Cézanne appear in the rendering of every object, but there are so many modifications in detail that the form is characteristically that of Matisse. The direction of change is towards a greater direct reliance on color-relations. In Cézanne the color is used much more to create an effect of solidity and spatial depth, while with Matisse the immediate quality of the color and the relations between the colors are of more primary interest. The essential difference may be said to be that in Matisse the raw material of color goes through a less extensive process of reorganization before it enters into the final form of the picture, while in Cézanne the harmonies of color are utilized primarily to give the effect of solidity and rather precisely defined three-dimensional spatial relations. In Matisse all such relations, and the effects of mass and line in general, are used to heighten the immediate color-relations. Both sets of elements are present in both painters, but what is secondary in Matisse is primary in Cézanne and *vice versa*. The essentially novel character of Matisse appears in these very varied rhythms of color, into which enter tints and hues that are to be found in no other painter. Their brilliance and the daring of the contrasts strike the unfamiliar observer as harsh and unpleasant; but intelligent familiarity transforms this impression into the recognition of a new form of abstract power, achieved immediately through the use of color.

His line functions with extraordinary power: even in his black-and-white drawings, the line is simplified away from its function of defining contours and enters into relations with other and conjoined simplified lines to make a unit of great plastic value. In other words, his line is negligible as contour but highly important in giving plastic value to what is contained between the contours of figures and objects. It is somewhat akin to that of Cézanne and shows the same rugged character, is heavy and wavy, and is always either made of color or obviously related formally to color. It is without the psychological expressiveness



of that of Degas or Picasso, and is always distorted out of any resemblance to the actual outlines of the subjects drawn.

Light is likewise handled to secure results purely plastic. It is used subtly, never naturalistically, and in general in subordination to the purpose of setting off and arranging the colors themselves. It is merged into the general fluid, rhythmic quality of the form. A human figure is rendered either flat or with three-dimensional reality according to the exigencies of design. Spatial quality is only present in a degree sufficient to guard against unreality, and its chief function is to make more varied and effective the color-rhythms which are the basis of the design. The compositional arrangement of the masses is always free from any rigidity or fixity; it is without any central mass, so that rhythm flows from one part of the canvas to another in accord with the flow of color, with which it harmonizes in its infinite variety of forms.

In his "Joie de Vivre" (Analysis, page 499), the most important of his early paintings, we see all these qualities, plus a strongly marked influence of the Persians and Hindus. The general effect is that of flat decoration, but there is no flabbiness of structure because of the great number of plastic relations established between all the elements employed. The color-*motif* serves as a central dominating principle, and the other relationships, line, mass, space, are present in the degree required by the demands of the color-form, so that the whole effect is one of conviction and reality. The color-form, in other words, is not an isolated effect but a fine adjustment between color and sufficient massiveness, spatial character, line, etc., to assure the reality of the forms created.

Cubism had only a slight influence upon Matisse. From it he derived possibly a slight impetus to the analysis of objects into their constituent planes, but his primary interest in color was not impaired. The chief influence was more subtle, and is to be seen primarily in the tendency to make a more extensive use of horizontal, vertical and oblique lines in the formation of his design, and to diversify his palette with blacks and grays of various shades.

The development of Matisse has been a continuous process marked by his constantly increasing control over his means. Design becomes more and more paramount, chiefly through distortions of all the plastic elements, color, line, perspective. Color

## MATISSE

becomes more pleasing sensuously, enters into more daring contrasts, more firmly knits the composition together, and its exotic quality recedes before the feeling of abstract color-power. Modeling appears in a more varied form—light and shadow as well as color play a part in it, though always in subordination to the motive of rhythmic color-contrasts. This same departure from naturalistic representation is seen in a distortion of perspective similar to that practiced by the Persians and Japanese and sometimes by Fra Filippo Lippi, by which distant objects are placed towards the top of the canvas. This act of violence to literal reproduction greatly enhances the value of the design. Figures become more and more definitely plastic units: sometimes they resemble negro masks, sometimes sculptural Hindu figures of the Third Century. The heavy, ragged line is often so freed from its ordinary function of fixing the contours of a body as a whole that the head, hands, breasts, etc., seem to be detached from the trunk.

These developments are seen in his large painting, "La Leçon de Musique," painted about 1920 (Analysis page 501), which represents his form at the highest state of perfection. All the possibilities hinted at in his extremely simple "Joie de Vivre," painted about 1910, are realized in the infinitely complex "La Leçon de Musique." The relation between the two paintings is interesting as representing an intelligent, purposeful, consistent development of an artistic form to a degree of completeness in realization that is without a parallel in contemporary painting.

Matisse may be summed up by saying that above all other painters he represents the interest in the interplay of color-forms for their own sake. This interest is comparatively abstract, and consequently it necessitates far-reaching distortions of every plastic element, including renunciation of color-values used naturalistically. The basic principle of his art is that of rhythmic contrasts, and especially color-contrasts, but these are ballasted and heightened by effects of line, space and mass. Color, applied in small areas, combines with line to give the effect of drawing, and color-units do a great part of the work in composing the picture. He is bold and original in his choice and combination of colors, and is unsurpassed in his single-mindedness and consistency in subordinating all other effects to the realization of forms that are a successful fusion of all the plastic elements through the medium of color. These forms have been made steadily more structural throughout the course of his painting, so that the



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element of mere decoration has progressively given place to the aspect of expressive form. In this sense Matisse represents interest in pure design carried to its highest degree.

It is inevitable that Matisse should have to pay for this form by a loss of sensuous charm and content of deep, universal human values. It comes much nearer being a *tour de force* than the forms of the really great men of the past. Compared with that of either Renoir or Cézanne his form is weaker because it holds in solution fewer values. He has not the artistic importance of the greatest painters, but in the use of all the plastic means to create a strong and distinctively personal effect he is by far the most important painter of our age.

## CHAPTER IV

### PICASSO

THE obvious contrast between Picasso's work and that of most of the great masters of the past has given the impression that he stands outside the familiar traditions of painting. But his indebtedness to the traditions of the past, and his ability to give them an original setting, are clearly evident in his work of all periods.

In his earliest paintings, the influences most apparent are those of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. From them he took over the expressive character of line, quality of color and its manner of application, and the obvious illustrative subject-matter in which psychological expression predominates. The effects in Picasso's work of what is known as his "Blue Period" resemble those of Cézanne, El Greco and of the Fourteenth Century Italian, Piero della Francesca. The Piero school-picture in the church at Arezzo shows the similarity of Picasso's general expressive use of color, line and light. Like Piero he makes a strong and very resourceful use of color, and more particularly of a single color. Blue is the foundation of the color-scheme, but blue amply varied and modulated with light to give diversified color-effects. This color works through the whole expanse of the picture, making direct color-contrasts and aiding in the composition and the construction of the masses themselves. It is less cool and less dry and more obviously expressive than Piero's blue. Compared with the color of Renoir and Cézanne it is lacking both in richness and in moving force; but it is very subtle, gives the effect of great economy of means, and is in keeping with Picasso's form, which is weaker than that of the greatest artists. Picasso uses this color-scheme as a foundation for his experiments in pure design which are obviously closely related to Cézanne's similar interest. In his large painting, entitled "Composition," the distortions as well as their functions are very clear. The linear quality of these distortions represents the enduring influence of Degas, plus a greater debt to El Greco and Cézanne. With this departure from naturalism there is the persistence of Picasso's accentuated illustrative



interest, so that his form is never so purely plastic as that of Matisse. The colorfulness of the picture likewise testifies to his debt to Cézanne and El Greco.

His line at this period also shows the influence of El Greco as well as of Cézanne: it is distorted to give a heightened psychological expressiveness, and the use of the line in connection with light to give the effect of modeling is also El Grecoesque. In the less successful pictures of the Blue Period the separate influences noted are more or less perceptible in isolation, but in his best work, as represented by the "Girl with Cigarette" (Analysis, page 503), they are very well fused into a characteristic Picasso form. The subject-matter displays Picasso's marked tendency to expressionism but on the whole the pictures of both the Blue and the so-called "Rose" Periods represent a successful integration of color, line, modeling, and space-composition, which, though primarily illustrative, is still sufficiently plastic to achieve a high degree of conviction.

In 1907 Picasso became interested in negro sculpture to such an extent that his paintings of that period are really a pictorial reproduction of the plastic values of that sculpture. This part of his work was only fragmentary and transitional, but the increased technical resources, in generalized form, remained at his command, and paved the way for his later work, in which the sculptural forms are more fully assimilated in terms proper to painting.

About 1909 the sculptural influence began to be paramount, and naturalistic rendering gave place almost completely to the rendering of abstract forms. In his still-lives of this period, several objects are often placed so close together that the whole group functions as a single mass. His former suave, curved lines have become sharp and heavy, and the objects outlined are angular and blocklike. The pinks, blues and yellows of his earlier work have changed into a somber combination of slate, drab green, and dull brownish red. These new shapes and colors are the distinctive mark of Picasso's form at that period and constituted the point of departure for cubism.

The roots of cubism can best be seen by an examination of the distortions in Cézanne's work, where a single element or aspect of an object is often exaggerated out of all proportion to the other elements. This distortion represents an imaginative analysis or dissociation of an object into its plastic elements and

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their recombination into a new form differing in appearance from the original object, but representing a more adequate embodiment of its plastic qualities. All painting which makes any pretense to artistic significance involves some measure of this selection and emphasis. This principle is precisely the principle of cubism, with the difference that in cubism, as in other contemporary painting, it is carried much further. Every object in the real world, as viewed from various angles, may be regarded as a multitude of planes which so melt into one another that their three-dimensional significance is largely lost. Cubism is an effort to bring this three-dimensional solidity into clear relief by abstracting and showing only a certain number of the planes. The superficial effect is totally different from that of conventional sculptural representations, but the work of Cézanne makes us see the two styles as representing a similar intention. In Cézanne, there is much more of the direct resemblance to real objects, as well as the conviction of solidity, as we have it in Michel Angelo; but we have also the distortions produced by the interpenetration of planes at angles departing from the normal, and the result is both an increase of conviction and a heightened sense of design.

In Picasso's cubism, the process is carried to such a degree of departure from naturalism that what we see is of little or no assistance in enabling us to recognize the object as it exists in nature. But that distortion is consistent with the imaginative purpose of art, providing the new design is more moving aesthetically than the old. There is no doubt that such resolution of an object into its constituent planes does sometimes produce a pattern much more interesting than a naturalistic rendering could hope to achieve. However, pattern does not by itself suffice for the design that constitutes great art. Consequently, many cubist pictures do not sufficiently anchor the forms to anything in the real world to make possible a transfer to them of the many echoes and reverberations which objects gain by their multiform relationships in ordinary experience. In other words, the cubist principle, if carried to its logical conclusion in wholly abstract design, constitutes as much an overaccentuation as does Botticelli's line or Leonardo's light; that is, one of the plastic factors is made to do the work which should be done by one or more of the other elements. It is only by the merging of *all* the elements that all the resources of our experience can be brought into play to give emotional force to the form presented. The appeal of



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pure cubism is, therefore, due to the same psychological factors which are responsible for our pleasure in a rug or in a wall-paper. Nevertheless, this fact does not prevent the imaginative and resourceful use of the cubistic technique from producing pictures of a high degree of aesthetic value. In fact, many of Picasso's cubist paintings achieve this value by a harmonious interplay of line, color, and space to produce unified designs embracing a wide variety of elements. If an observer cannot appreciate such paintings, and at the same time professes to enjoy the art-values in Titian, Velasquez or Renoir, we are justified in questioning whether he is not really deceiving himself. This does not mean that Picasso is as great as Titian or Renoir, but only that he has created a plastic form the essential value of which is less in degree than theirs, but not different in kind. In brief, Picasso's cubism made dominant what was merely a by-product in Cézanne's work, that is, one of the surface effects incidental to the rhythmic movements of solid objects in deep space. Picasso's followers attempted to give a *rationale* of the procedure which, psychologically considered, is nonsense and has brought discredit on the whole movement.

After a number of years of preoccupation with the cubistic technique, Picasso resumed his interest in painting in which the representative element is more in evidence. His line became finer and more in the manner of Ingres, though by no means an imitation of Ingres's line. The figures and objects have assumed a solidity and blocklike effect which constitute decided distortions from the naturalistic viewpoint. They have a monumental sculptural quality that was lacking in his early period, and it seems that the influence of negro art, of El Greco and Cézanne, have been more or less supplanted by the influences of those painters of the Italian Renaissance who were preoccupied with achieving three-dimensional solidity. He attains a definite plastic form of considerable power, but much of this work constitutes such an accentuation of heavy voluminal masses that it savors strongly of virtuosity. In short, his present work, while always of considerable value for its plastic form, shows a decided retrogression when compared with the balanced use of plastic means in the best of his earlier work.

Psychologically considered, Picasso's art represents rather a great natural sensitiveness and fertility than a reflective, resolute and well-directed search for an individual aesthetic conception. In men like Cézanne, Renoir or Matisse, it is possible to see a





Negro—Sixteenth Century  
Barnes Foundation



Egyptian—2000 B.C.

Design realized by distortions from naturalistic appearance.





Persian Miniature—Sixteenth Century  
Barnes Foundation

Shows distortion of perspective to achieve design.





Matisse

Barnes Foundation

Similar to Persian in the use of perspective.

Analysis, page 501.





Hindu—Third Century

Barnes Foundation



Matisse

Barnes Foundation



## PICASSO

constant struggle for a form which will express all that the artist has to say. This sense of a deeply purposeful effort towards a style adequate to carry a profoundly personal and original vision is absent in Picasso. It is true that he shows advance, but the successive styles seem less cumulative, less like stages on the way to a goal which has been foreshadowed all along, than they do in Cézanne or Matisse. In this sense, Picasso is unreflective, as is shown by the fact that his later work does not always show an improvement in the fullness and strength of his plastic form. In his latest period, for instance, the Renaissance solidity does not seem a real augmentation of his resources, but rather a reversion, since it suggests that a new interest had appeared which was in the nature of a distraction rather than of a fulfillment of his earlier and more natural interests. In the same way, his cubistic paintings are in most respects less satisfactory than those of his Blue Period. Such veerings marked with partial retrogression suggest an impulsive temperament, going off at a tangent from the line of maximum advance rather than using every new element of technique to deepen and enrich a fundamentally organic grasp of the world of plastic forms. Picasso's sensitiveness and his power to assimilate are far too great to allow his unreflectiveness to degenerate into mere imitativeness or superficiality, but his wavering does make him less powerful and original than the men of the first rank.



## CHAPTER V

### SOUTINE

SOUTINE's paintings are so different in appearance from other paintings, and from anything with which we are familiar in the real world, that the first effect is likely to be one of utter bewilderment. There is but little clue for their classification in any of the traditions, and often they seem to be mere masses of thick, brilliantly colored paint, thrown together without rhyme or reason. But even with all this bewilderment there is a feeling of intense and pervasive power that arrests and holds the attention; then we begin to perceive that this apparent jumble of strange elements is a design that conveys the feeling of power.

The most important element in achieving this form is color. It is of extraordinarily pleasing sensuous quality, rich, deep, juicy, and exists in a great variety of pure colors and their tonal variations. It is applied in thick masses, laid on in every conceivable direction, in areas varying greatly in size, modulated and accentuated by means of light, and always in striking contrasts. These colors, by their very sensuous quality and manner of application, are expressive of intensity. The color is reinforced and buttressed by a series of simplifications and distortions of all the other plastic elements, which are as original, as novel, and as strange as is the general appearance of the painting. The simplifications and distortions produce a greater departure from the actual appearance of objects and figures than do those of Cézanne or Matisse, and often leave only the slightest clue to the identity of the objects depicted. For example, what has the appearance of a mere broad splash of paint will, when examined closely, be found to represent the front of a house; and what looks like the spilling of spots of other colors in this broad area will be found to be the representation of a roof, or a window; but the wall of the house and the roof and the window convey the essential feeling of those structures. The house is seen to be leaning at an impossible angle and to be placed in relation to a tree grossly distorted, simplified to bare essentials, and rendered in colors which make a brilliant and dramatic contrast. Both the house and the tree will

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be placed against a rock or hill similarly distorted, but likewise rendered in their essential qualities and enriched with varied colors. Close inspection will reveal other areas of rich, deep, contrasting colors that represent various other elements of landscape, such as sky, paths, bushes, all broadly painted. It will be seen that all these various objects in the landscape relate themselves to each other to give an ensemble effect that carries the essential quality of landscape, impregnated with the abstract feeling of power. What at first looked like indiscriminate, pellmell splotches, is now seen to be really an orderly use of color for the purposeful achievement of forms that embrace a balanced use of line, space and mass. The great variety in the color, the bizarre directions of line, and the unusual divisions of space, give rise to a series of powerful and stirring rhythms that flow from one end of the canvas to the other. These rhythms, greatly diversified in size and intensity, render the basic feeling of rhythmic power that is to be found in all of his best work.

His design has the same kind of strength as Tintoretto's and is achieved by very much the same dramatic contrasts of color and light which Tintoretto used most strikingly in his depiction of skies, and less obviously in other objects. Soutine has enriched the contrast *motif* with more brilliant colors differently applied, and has made it one of his chief technical devices. The result is that the feeling of intense drama which Tintoretto gives in only certain parts of his canvas, pervades the whole painting in Soutine.

His technique shows other influences, notably those of Daumier, the impressionists, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and especially negro sculpture. He derives from the impressionists in the same sense that Cézanne does; that is, the basis of his technique is the use of color-contrasts in connection with direct sunlight. His modification of the technique compares, in originality and application to diverse purposes, with the modifications made by Renoir, Cézanne and Van Gogh. His painting is nearer to Van Gogh's in general feeling than it is to Renoir's or Cézanne's. Another kinship with Van Gogh is the comparative surface-quality of his effects; that is, they lack coördinated use of all the plastic means to achieve the monumental effects characteristic of Cézanne and Renoir. But Soutine's effects are not merely surface decoration: they represent a firm welding of decorative and structural elements in the creation of new plastic forms. His color-forms are quite



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as rich in some respects as those of Renoir and Cézanne, but he is very much more restricted in his ability to use them. He lacks the epic grandeur and majesty of Tintoretto, Cézanne, or Renoir, because he has less ability to organize voluminal masses in dynamic relations in deep space.

Soutine's method of modeling resembles Cézanne's only in that he uses areas of contrasting color in connection with light. His color areas are larger, the colors themselves depart further from the naturalistic, the brush-strokes are more obvious, and there is a deliberate intention to make a color design in itself with little reference to the actual appearance of faces or other features. To Cézanne's method he applied modifications of his own, and used that technique in depicting faces as well as objects in landscape. The general effect of a figure by Soutine is less convincing as regards solidity and reality than one by Cézanne; nevertheless, there is a sufficient degree of three-dimensional quality to harmonize with the general design.

Soutine's distortions are carried to a further departure from naturalistic representation than those of any of his important predecessors or contemporaries. A face, hand or other part of the body modeled by him, since it is intended to function as a plastic unit, is executed technically in about the same way as a textile or any object in a landscape. There is, however, a feeling of essential reality in a face or hand, plus a note of power and a definite color-form, all of which are Soutine's distinct achievements. In his rendering of figures is clearly discernible the influence of Daumier toward that simplification which tends to produce the effect of both the essential feeling of an object, and its exaggeration toward the grotesque or monstrous. In spite of all this simplification, added color-design, and distortion, the character of the sitter appears with strength, reality and essential dignity.

His very manner of using these distortions to the achievement of design, constitutes one of the important elements that give his work originality, interest and strength. He intensifies Cézanne's disturbance of the symmetrical balance of features, and he goes further than Matisse in separating parts of the body from their adjacent parts. For example, an ear will be double its natural size and situated with a perceptible area of background between the ear and the head. The grotesqueness is lost sight of in the plastic quality of the color-form made up of the detached ear, the intervening portion of the background, and the head itself. An

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oddly shaped nose will be out of proportion to the surrounding features, and crisscrossed by large brush-strokes of bright and contrasting colors. One shoulder will be convex and placed several inches higher than the opposite shoulder, which will be as concave as a saddle. The drawing is always done by means of color, and the lines of color which define the contours of objects are duplicated or related to similar streaks of color in the clothing and the background. Perspective is rarely rendered as distance, but is done in the manner of many moderns, including Matisse, in which distance is brought forward and toward the top of the canvas and rendered in terms of color. Space is always perceptible in this color-area, but perspective itself functions as a color-form in the general design.

Another influence which has been quite as strong as any of the others in making up Soutine's form, is that of negro sculpture. In a figure by Soutine there is perceptible the tendency to resolve faces and other parts of the body into their respective planes in a manner quite similar to that seen in negro sculpture. But he modified these distortions and used them to new ends, just as he distorted the technical devices of Tintoretto, Cézanne and others. A tree, a rock or a house in a landscape will be so resolved into planes that the object assumes the shape of an arm, leg, shoulder or face which has the feeling characteristic of negro art. His use of that influence is much more successful than Picasso's isolated and fragmentary employment of it. With the same means, Soutine merges the dynamic feeling of negro sculpture with other great traditions, and constructs forms that are definite plastic creations unified into a new organic whole.

The essential characteristic of Soutine's work is a succession of powerful rhythms. He is comparable to the greatest painters in his use of an infinite variety of rhythms, and in their effect in conveying the feeling of abstract power. He has great skill in adapting these rhythms to various kinds of subject-matter; but we feel the essential qualities of those objects, their individual strength, and their relation to each other, in such a way that the feeling of strength goes into our actual perception of the subject-matter. For example, the feeling of power in nature is rendered by means of a succession of strong rhythms that flow from one object to the other in a landscape. In a figure, the face, the hands, the clothing, constitute a succession of greatly varied rhythms that give plastic strength and essential character to the subject



## CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

portrayed. In a still-life, a vase stands at an absurd angle in relation to another grotesque vase, each containing flowers. The rhythms in the vases are of a different size, shape, color and direction from those in the flowers, and all the rhythms are made up of balanced line, color and space.

He has succeeded quite as well as any of the contemporary painters in achieving a plastic form of originality and power. He is in some respects a greater colorist than Matisse, in that his color is richer, more juicy and is the principal means of achieving a form which is sometimes more powerful than that of Matisse. In his best painting there is an organic unity that has all the completeness of Matisse's, plus a power which only Tintoretto and Cézanne have achieved. But his work is very uneven, and he lacks Matisse's calm, unruffled, purposeful pursuit of a definite object. Where Matisse is deliberate in his intent to organize, Soutine is passionate and impulsive: he lets himself go with apparently little concern for his success in organizing the picture. The result has been a great number of paintings that contain a series of beautifully rendered units which remain isolated, unrelated, plastically unorganized. But in many pictures, his passion has been sustained long enough to weld these units into an organic whole. The means of achieving these results is color—rich, fat, juicy color—which is an integral part of every unit in the canvas, and which enters into formal relations with line and space and ties all of them into a firmly knit organic plastic form. That form compares in strength and dramatic power with the forms of the great masters of the past.

## CHAPTER VI

### PASCIN

PASCIN's achievements in the line of some of the great traditions of painting make him one of the most important of contemporary artists. The influences of Daumier, Degas, Cézanne and Renoir are seen in his work, but his own contributions converted them into a distinctively personal form.

He is one of the great illustrators of all times and as such can be classed with Goya, Daumier, Degas and Glackens. Like them he conveys the information concerning subject-matter in such good plastic terms that his paintings rank as great art.

The influences of Daumier are seen in figures where the features are obliterated by the heavy line, and in the spots of color, light and shadow which Daumier used to give a bulky, massive, monstrous character to faces and other parts of the body. These grotesque or monstrous figures have a vivid reality and fidelity all their own. From Cézanne he took over whole color-forms and areas together with an attempt at modeling in color, as well as his method of distorting features of faces to enhance design. From Renoir he absorbed, to a certain extent, the lightness and delicacy in the use of similar colors, and also a tendency to a wavy, decorative line by which figures and objects assume a fluid, graceful, rhythmic character. Similarities to the techniques of Renoir and Cézanne are seen in his attempts to render the movement of volumes of color in deep space, and his use of light in patterns that contribute to the total design. These various influences are never literally followed, but are so deeply impregnated with Pascin's own feeling that a new form emerges.

His own contributions consist in drawing all the units of the painting with a short and wavy line, so that in any area of his canvas there is more movement than in either Renoir or Cézanne. These short, wavy lines are reinforced with areas of color and light which make active, almost nervous, rhythmic units that wave and flow into corresponding units in other parts of the canvas. The result is a sort of swirl somewhat akin to that of Rubens and Tintoretto, but less powerfully colorful than Rubens's



and less solid than Tintoretto's. This technique of Pascin's gives an exquisite, delicate rendering of the dramatic character of the situations represented.

He ranks with any of the modern or contemporary painters in his feeling for the compositional relation of objects to each other. He always paints scenes of everyday life, in which every object and person depicted departs radically from its naturalistic appearance. He practices distortion in regard to all the plastic elements, and succeeds in thus creating a new and more powerfully moving plastic form. Nothing in his canvas is static: if figures are posed to represent rest, they have the feeling of actually living the position in which they are placed; if the scene represents the figures or other objects in movement, they are moving actively. In addition, color, line and space partake of that movement so that there is always a fluid, graceful, rhythmic unity in which everything participates. It is his sensitiveness to the relation of these rhythms to each other in volume, size of line, quality of color, and variation in spatial intervals, that constitutes the essence of his work and gives it its high importance as an art form. This rare feeling for design is manifested in whatever subject-matter he depicts.

Pascin's works after 1914 show the influence of cubism in two ways. First, in a manner anticipated in some of Cézanne's painting, in which angular and rectangular surfaces of color give a quite particular effect. This device is used constantly in Pascin's subsequent work, but is so greatly modified and adapted to his particular design that new ends are achieved. It becomes the *motif* in many of his paintings, but is more of a rhythmic swirl than its counterpart in Cézanne, although there is a basic similarity in the interpenetration of color-planes at all angles. It is used also in indicating movement of voluminal masses in deep space. The second influence of cubism is less pronounced: it consists in the blocklike character of houses and other objects and, sometimes, a tendency to resolve the objects depicted into their constituent planes.

His color owes much of its charm to its delicate, pastel-like quality, and his supreme ability to make a minimum of paint function importantly as color. This gives to his paintings in oil freshness and delicacy, and makes them as fluid and light as pastel or water-color. This quality of color and the manner of its application on the canvas make his works look less solid, more like



Italian—Fifteenth Century

Barnes Foundation





Fragonard

Louvre

This painting is similar in point of design to the paintings on the preceding and the opposite pages.





Picasso

Analysis, page 503

Barnes Foundation





Picasso

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Analysis, page 504

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## PASCIN

patterns, and carry less well at a distance, than those of Renoir, Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse or Glackens. His lightness of modeling contributes to this effect.

His drawing is as loose, as terse, as varied in expression as that of any of the great illustrators. In certain respects he is unequalled; for example, in the drawing of a horse no artist has ever succeeded in obtaining convincing reality with such economy of means. He has the vision that is invariably the equipment of a great illustrator, and his sensitiveness to the essentials of varied aspects of life is extraordinary. His revelation of the qualities of objects and episodes in life that give them their emotional appeal, reveals not only a penetrating eye but a keen reflective mind. He has a fine sense of the picturesque, a sensitiveness to rhythms and great power to vivify his canvases with them. He lacks the ability to render the profound human values that one finds in the great old masters, but he has the intelligence to avoid subjects involving those values. He is essentially a painter of contemporary life and his wanderings have taken him to all parts of the world. What he saw in various countries and among people of different states of culture is revealed always in terms of the human qualities that are universal. In these paintings there is never an attempt to emphasize the narrative values of subject-matter—they are always subsidiary and are merely the means to an end. Pascin has achieved a strong plastic form, characterized by a succession of light, delicate, graceful rhythms.



## CHAPTER VII

### MODIGLIANI

NEARLY all of Modigliani's (1887-1920) paintings show single figures in which striking results are obtained chiefly by drawing of peculiar character and force. His incisive line effects a sharp definition of contours, but that function is subsidiary to the major one of rendering within the contours a form which is truly plastic. In other words, it is not so much the lines that move us aesthetically as what they inclose. In this respect, his drawing recalls that of some of the best of the early Florentines.

He was not interested in depicting movement or psychological states in the sitter. The effect of his figures is stiff and static, and the facial expressions are so uniform that it may be said that they are the inevitable result of his method of using the various plastic elements.

His representation of figures follows rather closely the characteristic oval, elongated faces, and the very long slender necks found in negro sculpture. But what strikes the eye at first as a too close similarity, disappears with the recognition that the negro *motif* was only a point of departure for the creation of a new design. The plastic quality of his line conveys the basic feeling of negro art, and we feel his pictures as pure painting of a high degree of excellence. His modeling is of a delicate but real three-dimensional quality in which there is no effort to obtain sculptural solidity. Line more than any other element is responsible for this modeling; in fact, even in a black-and-white drawing, Modigliani secures a feeling of three-dimensional solidity without recourse to the use of obvious shadows. In his painted figures the line of the contours works quite as well as color and light in rendering the three-dimensional quality.

His color also functions in a manner quite distinctive. It is not the bright, juicy and greatly varied color that one finds in Soutine or Matisse, though it is usually rich, delicate and light. The character of his line gives a particular plastic quality to the colored area between the linear contours, so that color is not felt as it is in Ingres as mere filling in of space between lines: Modigli-

## MODIGLIANI

ani's color enters into relation with his line and produces plastic forms in which the color is thoroughly integrated. In modeling faces, he often uses a yellowish red monochrome that gives a rather uniform, general color-value to the face and neck; this color distortion is seen to have a formal relation to other units in the painting, which contributes to the construction and enrichment of design. One finds features depicted by his characteristic line in combination with spots of single color to represent the mouth and eyes, with details omitted. In other words, the head is felt plastically and not representatively.

In the best of his work painted after he had attained his individual expression, for example, in his "La Jolie Menagère," the color-scheme as well as the manner of applying paint is reminiscent of Picasso. He had Picasso's ability to put beauty into an object by means of the very quality of paint. This was a lesson taught by Manet and incorporated by most of his important followers into their individual techniques. Modigliani absorbed Picasso's version of that influence and made it a strong constructive factor. Sometimes, as in the "Portrait of the Red-Headed Woman," he uses Manet's technique of broad painting modified by a particular use of color, so that the result compares favorably with the effects obtained by Manet.

He was considerably influenced by cubism, though not to the extent of painting cubistic pictures. The influence is seen, in a few paintings, in the sharp division of the surfaces of objects into multiple angular and cubic patterns. These patterns give an effect of complexity to his surfaces that is in striking contrast to the uniformity in pattern and color which we find in most of his best work.

His sense of composition and his utilization of space are of high order: the spatial relations between objects always establish harmonious compositional effects. His subtle use of space as a constructive factor in his general design is seen in the good relation between his figures and his backgrounds even when they are close together in color-value. The character of the background is ingeniously varied by modulations of light and by different colors that give a distinctive sensuous appeal to the whole painting. Sometimes there are backgrounds of drapery, painted in delicate and contrasting colors, that carry the essential feeling of textiles, while at other times the figure is placed against simple broad masses of uniform color; in both cases, there is a rhythmic contrast



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between the colors in all parts of the background, the clothing, and the figure.

His marvelously effective line is not ostentatiously displayed in merely linear play, but is subordinated to the requirements of design as a whole. Line, color and space are finely proportioned in the construction of individual units, which relate themselves to other units in the formation of a very personal and moving design.



Soutine

Barnes Foundation





Egyptian (Ptolemaic) Bas-relief, 300 B. C.

Barnes Foundation





Soutine

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Soutine

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## CHAPTER VIII

### OTHER CONTEMPORARIES

**Henri Rousseau (le Douanier)** (1844-1910) is not strictly a contemporary painter, but the vogue of his work began only a short time ago. His influence, which during his lifetime was negligible, is now in the ascendant. His form is an odd combination of an archaic literalism with distortions inspired by that interest in design which is the mark of all contemporary painting. It unites almost photographically detailed drawing with color that is sometimes naturalistic, sometimes untrammelled by any consideration of accuracy in reproduction. His canvases are packed full of masses, arranged in intricate spatial relationships, with complete disregard for literary or scientific plausibility. The result is a strange, naïve, exotic quality of great appeal. Such is his command of space that his congregated masses never get in each other's way or encroach on each other's room, and the intervals between them are so varied as to create a rhythmic, melodious spatial symphony. With this solid structure of plastic essentials the exaggerations in size of many of his figures, and the fantastic distortion of their color, combine to make a naïve but personal and very effective design. His pictures have the charm of a child's fairy-tale, but there is nothing childish or untutored in the skill with which they are executed.

**Utrillo** has a very personal expression which reveals his delicate sense of the picturesque, his ability to portray it in distinctive color-forms, and a feeling for quality of paint that has rarely been excelled. He renders the spirit of place with the sensitiveness, delicacy and lyric charm that one finds in the best work of Corot and Renoir. His use of architectural features related harmoniously to each other in space and bathed in an atmosphere of crystal clarity is reminiscent of the Corots of the Italian period. In his painting of figures and houses there is also the suggestion of Corot and of the impressionists' method of using light and color.

Most of his work represents street scenes or landscapes in which details are often painted with considerable fidelity to naturalistic



## CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

appearance, but with the broadening inevitable in the use of the impressionistic technique. The literalness of subject-matter is completely submerged in the powerful aesthetic feeling of design, the successful merging of color, line and space. Perspective is rendered almost realistically, and seems to be merely the means to show finely harmonious spatial relations between objects as they move from the foreground into the remoteness of infinity. This feeling of infinity Utrillo achieves with a rare degree of success by a subtle utilization of space and color.

His distinctive color-form is achieved by the sensuous quality of bright, rich and deep color applied in a manner resembling Manet's, which gives a feeling of exquisite choiceness to surfaces. The foundation of this color-scheme is a rich ivory, modulated by delicate blues, pinks and greens of great sensuous charm. Upon this foundation are laid broad areas of bright color and a series of linear patterns varied in size, direction, and degree of lighting, and enhanced in aesthetic value by the harmonious spatial relations between them.

Like all really great painters, Utrillo had the ability to put quality into every square inch of his canvas. When even a very small area is inspected closely, the harmonious fusion of light, line and color gives the feeling of a delicate, rich porcelain that owes much of its surface beauty to the accidents of firing. This shows a command of the medium of paint that has rarely been excelled. His work is characterized by a rich, glowing delicacy and poetic charm.

**Rouault** is primarily a draughtsman, but the plastic quality of his line, his ability to use it in the construction of design, make him one of the most original of contemporary painters.

He carried further the Daumier tradition of simplified figures and objects. His line is broader than Daumier's, is used more economically in the definition of contours, and its expressive character is more reinforced by juxtaposition with color. Instead of reserving line as did Daumier to emphasize expression, he makes a line which only partially defines a contour, goes off at a tangent, and meets other lines used in the same manner. He thus forms a swirl which is effective as indicating sufficiently the outlines of an object, but which gets an added effect in forming a pattern in various parts of an object or figure in which there are no contours. The line representing the contour is sometimes

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quite as wide as the colored area representing surfaces; and these two color-areas are often placed in relation to a spot of bare canvas which defines a contour by its juxtaposition with another broad color-area which seems to represent nothing but background. The result is a strong and very moving plastic form made up of color, swirling line and colored background.

The plastic quality of his line is so great that a face or a feature becomes a vivid, living form even when its contours are indicated by only a simple, brief, apparently meaningless streak of line. Other lines enter into relations with the ones that indicate contours and create new forms of overwhelming reality and force. The principle in operation in his drawing is the breaking up of the line of the contours of objects into a number of parts, the elimination of most of those parts, and the combination of the remaining ones to the creation of a new form. This principle has been followed, in lesser degree, by many great artists from the earliest time. Rouault carried the process much further and added to it another, that of making fragments of lines, which define contours of objects, enter into formal relations with other lines similarly used. He thus heightened aesthetic effect by utilizing his abbreviated linear indications to form an independent decorative design.

**Kisling** is one of the most versatile and sensitive of contemporary painters, and his work is in line with the best of the old and modern traditions. He has a sense for the picturesque, a very expressive line, and ability to use paint often equal to that of any other contemporary artist; furthermore, he has a good feeling for design. Yet with all these natural gifts, his work rarely bears the mark of a strong and original personality.

His usually sharp and rather hard line is successfully used in a variety of ways. In his portraits, it is reminiscent of Ingres in its rendering of beautiful linear patterns; also, it recalls Raphael's successful representation of both active and poised movement. His color has not the depth nor the pleasing sensuous quality of Soutine's, nor is it used with Matisse's power to organize the picture. However, it enters into harmonious but rather slight color-forms to which brilliant, glowing light contributes. Color is a factor in his rendering of a quite pronounced degree of three-dimensional solidity, but one which we feel is rather superficial, a painted solidity rather than the reality which comes from the



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structural use of color. It is perhaps the plastic quality of line more than color that renders the three-dimensional feeling; that is, his line in addition to defining contours succeeds in conveying plastic quality to what is inclosed between the lines. By his successful utilization of space he portrays an airiness and spaciousness comparable to that in the old masters. In his later work he adopted the cubist practice of making surfaces a succession of receding planes very close together and with the intervals between them active in determining the relations between various objects. Instead of rendering these planes abstractly, as was the practice of the cubists, he makes them representative of various naturalistic objects. The same control of space is seen in his portraits where the backgrounds are sometimes represented as mere screens of variegated colors and at other times carry the effect of infinity. At various stages of his career he has been influenced by a number of painters, especially by Renoir, Cézanne, Picasso and Henri Rousseau. He sometimes takes over whole forms with very little modification, and while these forms are not used in a strictly imitative sense, they show insufficient originality to entitle him to first rank among contemporary painters.

**Demuth** works mostly in water-color and his command of that medium is equal to that of any other contemporary painter.

His early work is chiefly illustrative. In it, the essence of the situation is portrayed in a vivid, personal manner, in a strong design. The foundation of that design is a repetition of plastic units constituted by figures and objects, against backgrounds of contrasting color-areas; the result is a succession of rhythmic color-units related to each other in a harmonious ensemble. His line is sensitively expressive both of movement and psychological states, he has a fine feeling for sensuous quality of color, and the ability to make color function in knitting the picture together. Like many of the moderns he emphasizes the planes in a picture, and he has such control over his medium that the planes themselves, and the intervals between them, function as bright and charming color-forms.

In his later work the representative elements in subject-matter are simplified and distorted by his own adaptations of the cubistic technique, with, however, sufficient representation to indicate the identity of the subject portrayed. In his planes the bright, delicate and varied colors are strongly modulated with light, and

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there are perceptible separate designs made up of each of the elements—of the planes, of the color, of the light, and of the spatial intervals. These designs unify into a total design that is comparable in plastic strength to the best cubist pictures of Picasso and Braque. His method of using interpenetrating planes and angular and cubic surface patterns is similar to Cézanne's, but the resulting forms are slighter. His paintings of all periods consist of a series of rhythms of light, line, color and space, which have a delicate, fluid charm.

**Lotiron** has obtained, by means that are essentially modern, a considerable degree of the plastic values found in the best of the early Dutch, Italian and French painting. The principle of his design is a rendering of successive planes moving from the foreground into deep space, and a putting in those planes of objects that have formal relations with all the other objects. He thus achieves a balanced, well-proportioned, strong composition. The effect of his abstract design is at times reminiscent of Titian, of Poussin, of the early Dutch landscape and *genre*-painters, and of Pissarro. Although his methods are totally different from theirs, there is a feeling of basic similarity in the functional values of his line, color, and space.

His technique derives from that of the impressionists, especially Manet and Pissarro, with greater simplicity in the method of applying paint, the use of light, and the function of color. His employment of light is generally subtle, although at times he floods his canvas with sunlight in the impressionistic manner. His drawing, by means of color used sometimes in rather ragged areas and sometimes with linear incisiveness, is successful in portraying both active movement and the static quality seen in Millet's figures. His color is totally different from that of the impressionists in its quality and its relation to light, and he depends less upon the sensuous quality of color than its relation to other colors. Space is subtly rendered and enters into harmonious relations with his color-forms to establish compositional units of a high grade. It is the successful coördination of these compositional units with each other that gives his pictures their particular value.

While Lotiron has a definite style, his technique is not employed mechanically. His use of line, color, and space is varied to suit particular situations, to render the spirit of place, and it is this



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successful adaptation of means to specific ends that makes his paintings appeal independently of subject-matter.

**Derain** is one of the cleverest eclectics of all time. His extensive familiarity with the history of painting and his command over the medium of paint have enabled him to grasp and portray the characteristics of the work of many important artists; but what he has accomplished remains a set of isolated devices, purely mechanical tricks, never informed by any essential vision of his own, and not fused into a personal and distinctive style. He is like the popular lecturer or sermonizer who can give to his discourses a flavor of culture or profundity by quotations out of every book in literature, but whose borrowed ideas and rhetorical flourishes have no more inner coherence than the fragments in an encyclopedia of quotations.

The foundation of his effects is usually the smooth, textile-like, rich beauty that Chardin, Daumier, and Cézanne gave to surfaces by the sheer quality of superb painting; but in Derain these surface effects are unsupported by any purpose or ideas that make real creation. He has no real feeling for color: its sensuous quality is indifferent, and the color-relations are either conventional or directly imitative of some other painter. Yet he has a real pictorial sense. His backgrounds and figures are well coördinated, the composition is orderly and his work is never that of a bungler. When a subject interests him, his treatment of it, by other men's methods, is effective throughout even though it shows no real personal grasp of essentials. The majority of his portraits done on order are perfunctory exhibitions of virtuosity, destitute of aesthetic feeling.

Upon the foundation of the appealing Daumier-Cézanne-like surfaces, all kinds of imitations of other painters are grafted without search for an individual creation of his own. He imitates whoever may have caught his attention at the moment. Some of his heads are like Giotto's, with loose, fluent painting, a luminous quality, and even an able imitation of the effects of time; other heads are in the manner of Bronzino, with a few strokes of flat color in contrast, that reproduce even the feeling which the cracks and the patine of great age have given to the old masters; all, however, have a cheapness akin to that of Greuze. In a portrait, a synthesis of Bronzino, Corot, and Courbet will produce a striking impression until one observes that the head has the feeling

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of *papier-mâché* and that the face is like a mask. In another figure-piece, the arms, the crossed hands, and the folds of the dress are in the El-Greco-Cézanne style but the actual *feeling* is missing and the quality of the whole painting is that of a still-life. In a Chardin-like still-life, for instance, a dish with fruit, vegetables, and bread, the whole effect is hard and metallic, yet lustrous withal; it shows that Derain can imitate other painters' handling of paint, but not their grasp or understanding of the thing painted. He can paint a nude in the style of Renoir, but never the nuances which give the Renoir a poetic charm; he can paint textures that look like those of Cézanne, but minus the reality and conviction. In short, Derain has on tap a store of knowledge of all painting which he draws upon as whim or the exigencies of the moment dictate, but without personal feeling or inspiration. Flower-pieces like those of Fantin-Latour and Hans Thoma, heads like those of Ingres or of Degas in his early period, pervasive echoes of Matisse and Picasso—all these show Derain's superb craftsmanship, as well as his archaeological lore and his contact with contemporaneous movements. The absence in all of them of anything distinctive, any advance upon the model copied, reveal his essential artistic nonentity. All painters owe a debt to their predecessors, but a real artist adds something of his own to what he borrows. When the note of Cézanne creeps into or dominates a picture by Pascin, the painting always remains a Pascin, in color, composition, drawing and feeling: it is never a bogus Cézanne. Derain has nothing of his own to put into a picture; he can paint an imitation of any one, but with the essential, indefinable feeling which confers individuality and authentic artistic status left out. His great technical skill is not an instrument of expression, but a veneer concealing an inner vacuum. He is to our age what the Carracci were to the Italian Renaissance.

**Chirico's** design is attained by modifications of old and new traditions. His massive architectural elements in composition are reminiscent of Masaccio, but their linear quality is emphasized. He accentuates both the linear and the three-dimensional qualities of objects and figures, emphasizes space, and uses strange and extensive distortions. Broad uniform areas of color enter into harmonious relations with each other and with patterns made up of equally broad areas of accentuated light and shadow. The relation between the separate patterns made up of color,



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light and shadow, and the linear elements representing subject-matter, constitute his plastic form. An added note in the design is the exotic quality of the color, which gives a mystic feeling such as one finds in El Greco. The design is strengthened by his fine feeling for the compositional relations of masses to each other, and by his ability both to emphasize space and to make the spatial relations between compositional units an element of great power. His paintings are good plastic equivalents of mystical poetry.

Segonzac's paintings owe their value to a simplification of the technique of Cézanne's early work done under the influences of Courbet and Manet, and its adaptation to traditions that followed it. He used Cézanne's manner of drawing by means of color, accentuated Manet's method of broad painting, and used colors of the quality and dark shades characteristic of Courbet. To these older traditions, Segonzac applied the cubist practice of making constituent planes vividly perceptible in space. He selected a few of these planes for emphasis, treated them broadly in areas of rather uniform dark color and combined them into new forms. The color in his earlier work is almost always dark, but each tone has such depth and richness that we do not miss the brilliance found in most of the moderns. In his later work, bright colors are used and with little or no loss of the essential feeling of power. The foundation of his form is the contrast between broad areas of dark colors placed in relation to figures or objects rendered in varying degrees of yellowish ivory-white, painted in a broad and simple manner and with almost sculptural thickness. The extreme simplicity, the economy of means, the deep color, and the vigorous painting, endow his work with novelty and considerable power.

## APPENDIX





# I

## METHOD AND DESIGN

THE purpose of this book has been to set forth a method of looking at the essentially pictorial or plastic qualities in paintings, and of judging them by those qualities. We may conclude with a summary of the points in which it differs from the methods usually employed, and with examples of the specific application of our method to the work of some of the more important painters.

It is obvious that no method can be applied without experience and reflection, and that neither experience nor reflection is possible without method: the two elements in the situation are inseparable. The untrained observer of paintings does bring to them a method of observation, but it is the method of practical life, and that usually leads to the interpretation of pictures as what may be called congealed narrative. Mr. Clive Bell's book *Art* consists of a long-winded castigation of such interpretation, in favor of what he calls "significant form"; however, "significant form" is never defined or analyzed, so that at the end of what amounts to an indefinite series of "don't's" his reader is left totally at a loss for guidance as to what to look for. But, as Professor Dewey points out, intelligence means the use of definite ideas for the interpretation of experience, and this is as true of intelligent observation as of intelligent action.

The academician merely replaces the error of reading stories into pictures by the error of applying to them a set of technical dogmas, which substitutes mechanical rule for intelligent judgment. He speaks of color, of composition, of drawing, of modeling, as though there were set standards for these things, standards which can be applied with as little recourse to personal feeling as is required to measure a quart of water. The present method is an attempt to supplant both the popular and the academic error by giving some intimation of how to look for plastic or "significant" form, and the criteria by which to judge it when it has been found.

We have seen that plastic form is the synthesis of the plastic elements or means—color, light, line, space—in a rhythmic, unified whole. It *expresses* the painter's vision of some object or situation



in which human values are realized: hence the first requirement of a great painter is that he should have something to say; and to have "something to say" is to have an eye for the essential human values that the world reveals. Judged by this test, Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Michel Angelo, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Claude are all great artists. But what is essential to great art is that what is said must be something individual, for there is no great merit in repeating what some one else has already said. Academic and eclectic painters fail to qualify as artists because they are the purveyors of other men's ideas. Of course, there are degrees in originality. Raphael is inferior to Titian or Rembrandt in the depth or width of his individual vision, but he does much more to modify, unify, and give personal quality to what he took from other men than, for example, the Carracci. Poussin is of something less than first-rate individuality, but he was a great artist because of his ability to fuse traditions into a form never duplicated in the work of any of his predecessors. It is impossible to judge any painter without knowing his sources, what he had to work with, and consequently in the following analyses such sources will be so far as possible indicated.

What an artist sees in the world that escapes others, is valuable as art only when he has a command of the means by which it can be put down. For example, the humanitarian interests of Millet, or the scientific interests of Leonardo are not susceptible of being rendered satisfactorily in plastic terms. In science, solid mass is all-important, and color is a superficial aspect of things; but in the scale of values which prevails in painting, the relative importance of solidity is much less. Leonardo's primary interest was in science; his deficient interest in the qualities which lend themselves to a rendering in pictorial terms is reflected in his very unequal command of plastic resources, by his bad color, over-emphasis on light, and dependence upon effects adventitious to painting, even semi-literary effects, such as the smile in "Mona Lisa."

The question of the degree of realization of each element which a given plastic form requires is so involved that it needs further illustration. The error most readily made is that when a particular element is not obviously accentuated in a picture, the painter is to be charged with a deficiency in it. For instance, in Piero della Francesca there is so little attempt to indicate movement realis-

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tically that the figures seem static, while in Rubens or Delacroix, the movement is very obvious; but that difference cannot be counted against Piero's art. Movement of a striking character, in a design so essentially detached and unemphatic as his, would be an incongruity. The same principle applies to Rembrandt and Monet in the question of color. Monet's canvases have more numerous and brighter colors than Rembrandt's, but Monet is not therefore a greater colorist. Rembrandt's design commits him to a comparatively subdued use of color, but the color functions so powerfully that the restraint effects a stronger unity of design than Monet ever achieved. Raphael is sometimes spoken of as the greatest of all masters of composition, but that is merely because his effects of grouping are so obvious that they cannot be overlooked. The simple composition of Rembrandt's "Unmerciful Servant" represents a more effective grasp of spatial relationships and their moving power than anything in Raphael. The sense of a wide expanse would be incongruous in Rembrandt's design; instead, there is, within a small compass, a perfect sense of roominess, with no space gone to waste, none without its own interest and value.

The same principle may be illustrated if we compare Botticelli with Renoir. The elaborate arabesques and linear rhythms of Botticelli may seem an element of appeal which is lacking in Renoir; but as soon as we consider integration into a total form as the touchstone of aesthetic value, we see that Renoir was a far greater draughtsman than Botticelli. His expressive line, constructed of color and light, fits perfectly into his form and not only gives a convincing representation of shape and movement, but contributes much to a structural plastic unity.

The test of the value of any plastic element is always—does the means in question absorb our attention, distract us from the form as a whole, compete with the other means, or does it merge with the other means and heighten their appeal? The painter who relies on isolated effects practices virtuosity, and that belongs aesthetically with the feats of the prestidigitator or juggler. It is only with relation to design that we can judge whether any given use of color, line, light, or space is an overaccentuation, a piece of virtuosity, or a legitimate, convincing achievement of reality.

Furthermore, one of the most important factors in a painting—that of subsidiary designs—can be appreciated only through the recognition of the function of design as a whole. It is uni-



versally agreed that rhythm is one of the most important qualities in a work of art, but rhythm is much more than a duplication of lines or masses. Rhythm at its best appears in the duplication of the general design in the parts of the picture. These subsidiary designs would be indistinguishable from a multiplicity of motives so great as to interfere with unity if we did not keep in mind their relations to the central or dominating design. Titian's "Assumption" is one of the great triumphs of plastic art when considered as an instance of the enrichment of plastic form by many subordinate but harmonious forms; however, an observer who did not grasp the design as a whole would be justified in charging it with being essentially a series of episodes. When Mather says of Signorelli's and Cosimo Rosselli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel that they are overcrowded, he is guilty of this kind of blindness. It is true that there are many figures and episodes in these pictures, but they are so merged, through intermediate stages, with the total design, that there is no loss of unity. Indeed, the highest mastery in art is manifested in this capacity to include smaller designs in a single all-embracing form. It is impossible to recognize that fact if the elements that go to make up a picture are considered in isolation.

In the course of this book there has been repeated condemnation of both academic pictures and those in which overaccentuation appears. However, the study of such pictures has a value which calls for some discussion. The beginner in appreciation is usually confronted with the difficulty that a picture is, plastically, a chaos in his eyes. The work which must be done before plastic form can be grasped is impossible for him because he cannot find what he is to abstract and to consider with relation to the form as a whole. Hence, in the work of an academic painter like Raphael, the very quality which makes him unsatisfactory as an artist makes him more valuable to the beginner than such painters as Velasquez or Renoir, in whom there is complete freedom from accentuation. The principle is the same as that by which any one learning to enjoy poetry may be advised to read Kipling, in whom the obviousness of everything makes it difficult for the beginner to go astray. After he has developed sufficiently to read Keats, he will recognize the cheapness of the means by which were attained the effects which he formerly found pleasing.

The same principle should govern the study of the old masters and the more modern painters. In the chapter on "The Transi-

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tion to Modern Painting" we saw that the distinction between the two was the liberation of relatively pure design in modern painting. The design in a Cézanne, pleasing to a connoisseur because undiluted by anything extraneous, is not necessarily perceptible and pleasing to a tyro. The very absence of irrelevancies which makes possible a much greater variety, freshness, and originality in design, is likely to be confusing to a beginner. The dilution of plastic form, such as we have it in an academic painter of the past, for example, in Andrea del Sarto's "Madonna of the Harpies," makes possible a more ready abstraction of what design there is. Consequently, the process of education in painting requires a constant cross-reference between contemporary art and the art of the past. That each reveals the significance of the other is true both as regards the actual historical relationships, and as regards appreciation. We learn to see design at its best by seeing it in a more primitive form, and when we have seen it at its best, we learn to make the necessary discount when irrelevancies obscure it.

In the analyses which follow, each picture will be considered with reference to its design as a whole, and the success with which the painter carried out his design to realize a moving and convincing plastic form. The use of each of the plastic means will be commented on with regard to its integration in the form, and not as something which could be judged in independence of such integration.



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THE academician judges works of art by mechanical standards, as something which may be catalogued, pigeonholed, compared with fixed patterns. He isolates the various elements and attempts to judge them without reference to the rôle which they play in design or the form of the picture as a whole. In other words, the academician's judgment mistakes the shell for the kernel. We have already pointed out instances of such judgment and of their inadequacy, but the contrast between those methods and the method employed in this book needs to be made more definite by further illustration and summary.

Professor Mather in his *History of Italian Painting* combines the academician's error plentifully with the most elementary of all mistakes, that of interpreting paintings by their subject-matter. In his judgment of Masaccio's "St. Peter Raising Tabitha," he condemns, as the artist's afterthought, two figures which serve as the central mass and which are really essential to the plastic form of the picture. We find a similar confusion in his extraordinary discussion of Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre," as follows: "My own reading [of the meaning of the picture] is merely based on the contrast between the rustic and urban lovers, and an intuition that the courtier in peering so wistfully at the shepherd is merely seeing himself in a former guise. In lassitude, perhaps in satiety, beside a courtly mistress who is absent from him in spirit, there rises the vision of earlier simpler love and of a devoted shepherdess who once piped for him in the shade. The vision rises as he sweeps the lute strings in a chord unmarked by the far lovelier mistress at the fountain. The golden age of love, like Arcady itself, is ever in the past." It would be difficult to find, outside of the writings of Elie Faure, or his follower, Walter Pach, anything "softer" than that jumble of rhetorical irrelevancies. Another illustration of the same sort of criticism is Professor Mather's comment on Michel Angelo's "Creation of Adam": "It is all noble energy in the figure of God giving life by His touch, all noble languor in the relaxed figure of Adam only dimly

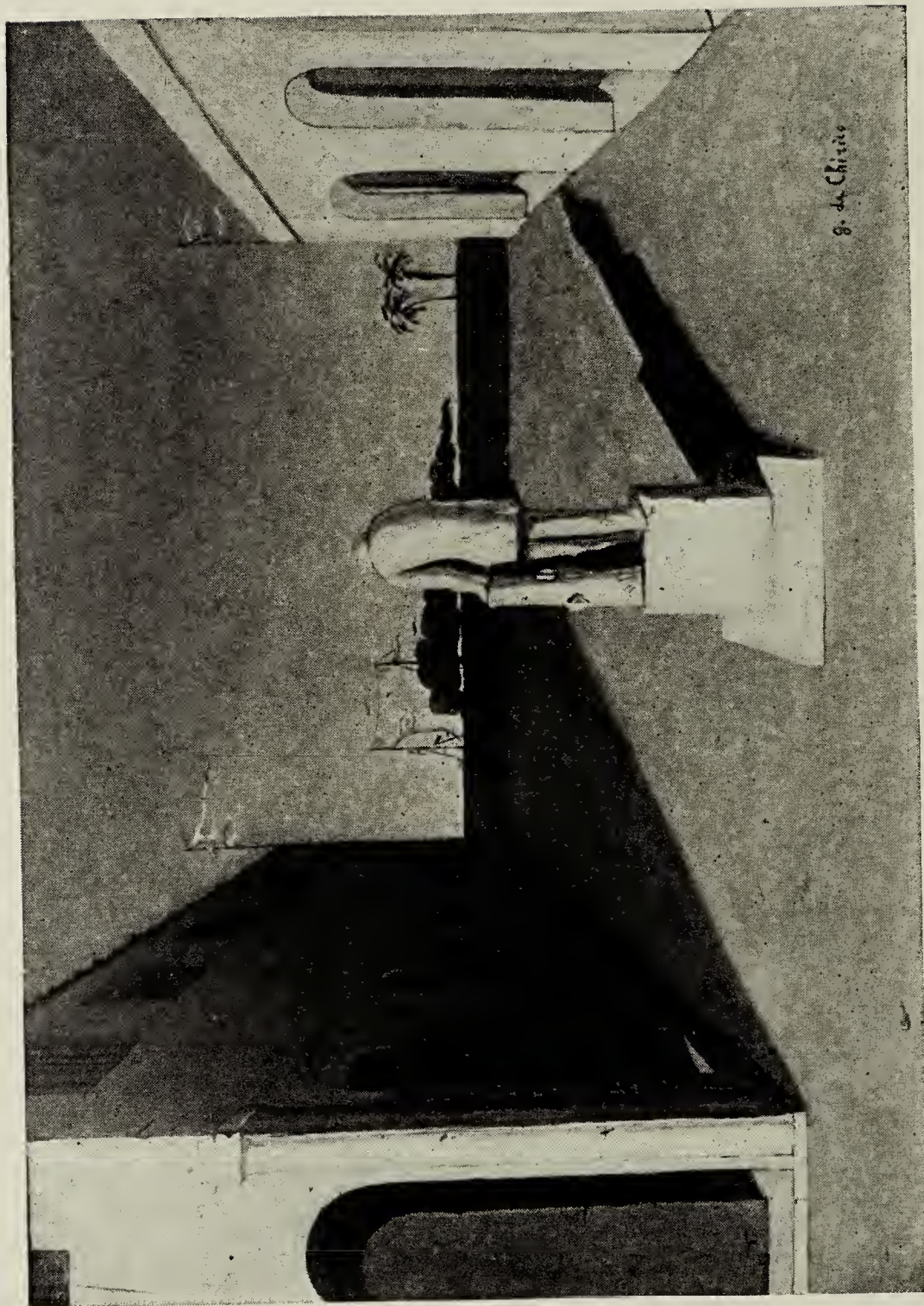




Pascin

Barnes Foundation

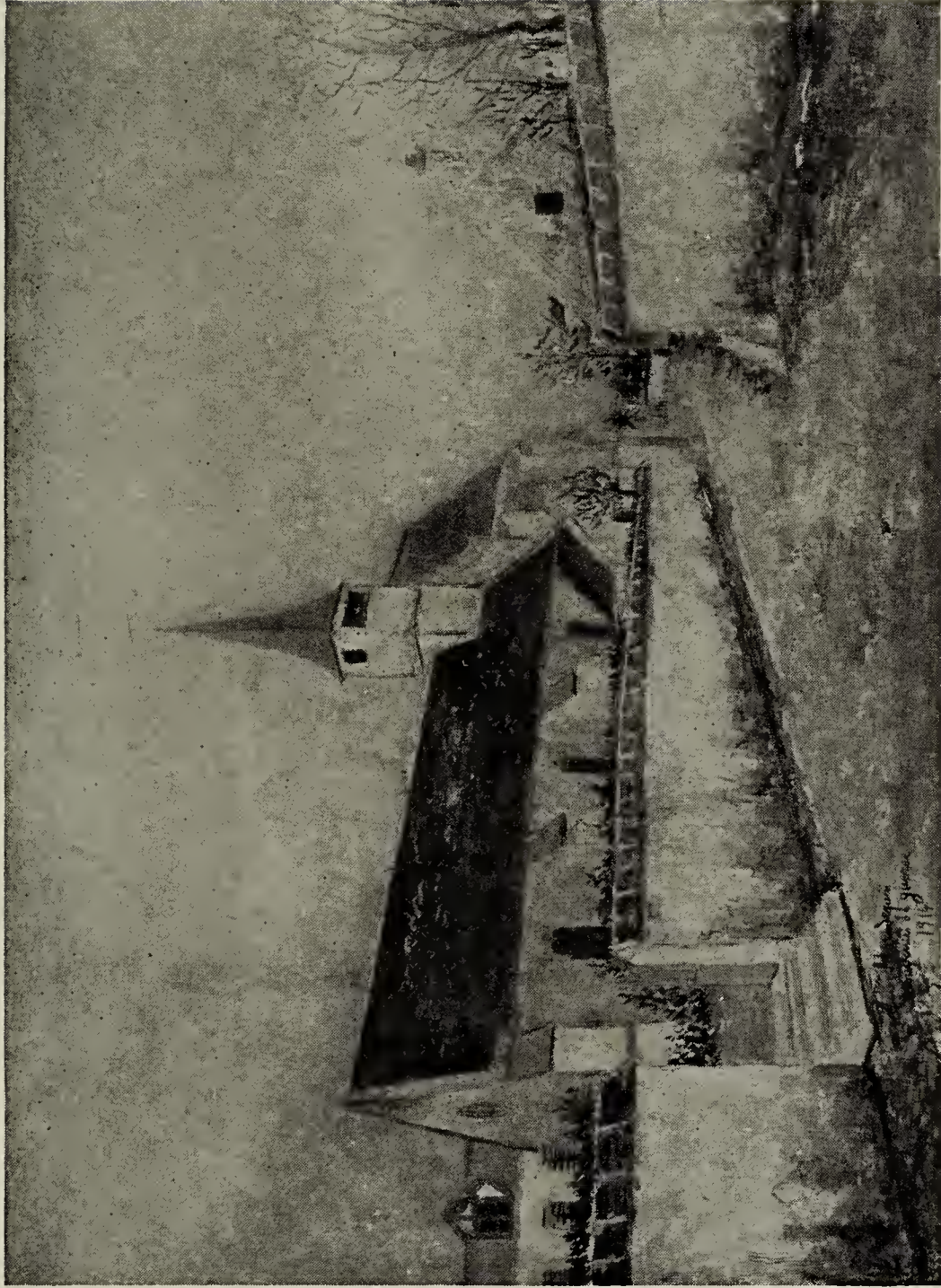




Chirico

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Utrillo

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Segonzac

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conscious of himself and wistful. There could be no truer or more striking illustration of the pessimistic view that life was imposed upon the earth and brought sadness with it. The titan form of Adam has a singular and enigmatic relaxation. He undergoes a gift he has never besought and faces it with something between confusion, mistrust and resignation. Perhaps the splendid body would have been more at ease, had the soul not been added. So in a spirit of Christian pessimism, Michel Angelo represents Deity sharing its divine powers with the first man." In a similar strain, he also sentimentalizes over Raphael for the beauty of his Madonnas, the elevation of his themes, and so on.

The standard implicit in such criticism makes it incumbent upon Professor Mather to laud the most incompetent daubs of the academic painter or of the peddler of sentimental chromos, provided they embody an edifying moral or romantic situation. It would make of Turner a far greater painter than Claude, since in his pictures there is a much greater wealth of narrative incident. The sum total of his references to the plastic qualities of the pictures he discusses, occupy scarcely a score of pages in his whole book. Even worse is the fact that his conception of basic art values are perfunctory efforts to follow a rule which would make fixed standards for all paintings, irrespective of design.

Another kind of confusion is exemplified in the writings of Elie Faure. His four-volume work on the history of art might with propriety be entitled a historical romance in which painters and paintings are extensively mentioned. It represents the spirit of the romancer and not of the historian; indeed, with the history of *art* the book has nothing to do. Not only is what he says irrelevant to its ostensible subject, but, as may be seen from almost any passage taken at random, the long-drawn, almost orgiastic, ecstasy of his manner betrays a total submergence of intelligence in emotion. This is the worst possible preparation for appreciation. A generation ago William James observed this method in process of application, and commented on it as follows: "I remember seeing an English couple sit for more than an hour on a piercing February day in the Academy in Venice before the celebrated 'Assumption' by Titian; and when I, after being chased from room to room by the cold, concluded to get into the sunshine as fast as possible and let the pictures go, but before leaving drew reverently near to them to learn with what superior forms of susceptibility they might be endowed, all I overheard was the



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woman's voice murmuring: 'What a *deprecatory* expression her face wears! What self-abnegation! How *unworthy* she feels of the honor she is receiving!' Their honest hearts had been kept warm all the time by a glow of spurious sentiment that would fairly have made old Titian sick."<sup>1</sup>

In short, Mr. Faure seems to suppose that all appreciation of art ought to be what, according to Santayana, popular enjoyment of music usually is, "a drowsy reverie relieved by nervous thrills."

The most influential contemporary writer on art is probably Mr. Bernard Berenson; his views embody most of the characteristics of academicism and irrelevant sentimentalism. His four volumes on the schools of Italian Art set forth a theory of painting ostensibly based upon psychological considerations made sufficiently concrete to serve as a guide for judgment. As a specimen of the best kind of psychology and of criticism of plastic art that the academic tradition has produced, his theory will repay attention.

According to Mr. Berenson, the essentially important qualities of paintings are four—tactile values, movement, space-composition, and color, though the last is much the least important. He says that the purpose of art is life-enhancement, that tactile values, that is, modeling which gives the effect of solidity, stimulate our conviction of reality by vividly suggesting the actual feeling of an object, and thus enhance our sense of life. He maintains that the representation of movement causes us to rehearse in ourselves the muscular sensations which would be involved in performing the act or assuming the posture which the picture presents to us. Hence by the successful rendering of movement, or of a posture which invites us to a reposeful muscular state, our vital energies are stimulated. Space-composition, in giving us a vivid sense of the extensity of the world about us, enlarges our personality and makes us feel that we are living more abundantly. In his earlier work, Mr. Berenson dismisses color almost entirely, but in the final summary of his aesthetic theory, at the end of his volume on the North Italian painters, he admits having underestimated the value of color, but still allows it only secondary importance. He writes: "Color is less essential [than tactile values, movement, and space-composition] in all that distinguishes a master-painting from a Persian rug." From all this it follows that painting is at its best when it renders the human figure, and the additional

<sup>1</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii, page 471.

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reason by which this conclusion is confirmed is interesting. He says that all appreciation of art, all preception of natural objects, involves a projection of our feelings into the things we see, but in figure-painting alone is this not illusion, since feelings akin to our own do animate other human beings, but they do not animate trees, rocks, and mountains. In short, his conceptions are based upon the always untenable, and now obsolete, theory of "Einfühlung." No sound psychology has ever maintained that in perceiving an object we necessarily go through a process of internal mimicry of it, and find it agreeable or disagreeable according as the movements involved are or are not congenial to our muscles. Concerning the theory of Einfühlung, Bosanquet writes: "It has been supposed that when we take pleasure in a graceful curve, our eye is executing this same curve, 'that we feel pleasure in this movement, or in the ease of it, and turn this pleasure into a quality of the object whose outlines we follow.' Well, it simply is not so—the eye in following a curve moves with jerks and in straight lines. 'The muscles are mere scene-shifters.'" <sup>1</sup>

If the theory offered by Mr. Berenson were true, any distortion of the human figure would invite us to attempt to make movements or to put ourselves in postures which our bodies could not possibly accomplish, and the effect would be objectionable to us. We should scarcely find pleasant our attempts to mimic the uncomfortable position of the nude in Manet's "Olympia," or the contortions depicted in the best work of El Greco. His theory rests on the misconception that art is essentially photography, and in this case, a kind of muscular photography. Incidentally, it may be remarked that the whole theory of Berenson is adopted by Professor H. S. Langfeld, in a book which shows on nearly every page a total lack of real aesthetic experience. It makes of art something completely comprehensible to a person who has had no personal or immediate contact with actual works of art.

In his explanation of "tactile values" Mr. Berenson exceeds the ordinary limits of sophistry. His emphasis of the fact that suggestions of touch give a note of conviction to our visual perception of an object, is only an elaboration of the platitude that the word "tangible" is a synonym for "real." It is undeniable that effects of solidity in a painting may add to the reality of an object, and so represent one of the innumerable ways in which our natural powers may be called into play by a work of art.

<sup>1</sup> Bosanquet, *Three Lectures on Aesthetics*, page 24.



But they have no such primary or unique importance as Mr. Berenson ascribes to them. To give them that importance is to fall back on the imitative theory of art and throw to the winds all considerations of design. For example, in the work of Claude, tactile values are very imperfectly rendered, though with no damage to aesthetic value, since it is not by touch that we grasp the essential quality of landscape. Mr. Berenson's theory logically binds him to accept as great masterpieces the countless academic paintings in which tactile values are violently overaccentuated by painters who are merely skillful imitators. He shows that he fails to grasp the importance of the specific medium of an art and would make of painting something that could be at best inferior imitation of sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of theories so patently absurd, it is easy to understand his overestimation of Florentine painting as compared with Venetian, as evidenced by the very singular statement about Rubens: "In every other respect (than technique), he was an Italian: and, *after Michel Angelo, to say Italian was practically to say Florentine.*"<sup>2</sup> Rubens was assuredly much more Venetian than Florentine. Mr. Berenson's confusion of the values of painting with those of sculpture leads him to overlook altogether the plastic values that make up the real greatness of the painters of the Italian Renaissance.

By his emphasis upon space-composition, Mr. Berenson reduces relatively flat painting to mere pattern, since his conception implies that composition, in the ordinary sense of the word, is relegated to a status outside the formal character of a picture. Light, except as an aid to modeling, is never mentioned, yet light as a pattern in itself and as a means of organizing a painting, was constantly used by the great Italians.

One of the gravest faults in Mr. Berenson's writings is his neglect of color. He regards it essentially as only a means of embellishing surface. Its structural and organic values are never hinted at, either explicitly or by implication, yet color is the plastic element on which the most important achievements of the artist depend. How important color is, has been indicated in our discus-

<sup>1</sup> "The illustrator who communicates ideated sensations which compel us to identify ourselves with such virility, with such proud insensibility, with such energy and endurance, is an artist indeed." *The North Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, page 60. He is speaking of Cosimo Tura. Our intention is to contest not his estimate of that particular painter, but his reasons for it.

<sup>2</sup> Italics ours.

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sion of color, of Giotto, Piero della Francesca, the Venetians, Rubens, Rembrandt, El Greco, Velasquez, Renoir, and Cézanne. It can hardly be questioned that a sense of color is the one thing which no painter of the first rank has ever lacked. It is not without significance that Mr. Berenson's volume on Venetian painting is almost entirely an account of the social and political conditions of the time, and of the literary qualities of the painters discussed. In the conclusion to his volume on North Italian painting he recognizes the need of amplifying his account of color, but he has made no move to do so in the nearly eighteen years since the book was written. It is evident that he has said substantially nothing about color, because his essentially academic theory has blinded him to what, more than any other element, characterizes painting as an art. Such are the consequences of thinking of painting in terms of sculpture.

Mr. Berenson's mechanical standards, and his reliance upon irrelevant sentimentalities in the judgment of paintings are due primarily to his fundamental classification of the qualities in plastic art under two heads, illustration and decoration. Decoration he defines as "all those elements in a work of art which appeal directly to the senses, such as color and tone; or directly stimulate ideated sensations, such as, for instance, Form and Movement." By illustration he means "everything which in a work of art appeals to us, not for any intrinsic quality, as of color or form or composition, contained in the work of art itself, but for the value the thing represented has elsewhere." He claims that in any given work of art these qualities vary quite independently of one another and he cites Raphael as great in illustration and, except as regards space-composition, comparatively inferior in decorative power; in Masaccio, he implies, the contrary is the case.

Such a classification represents the very essence of academicism, in that it assigns the values of a single organic whole to two separate and unrelated compartments. It omits the fundamental principle of art, the adjustment of form to expression, that is, of integration of the values of what is represented in properly plastic terms. He praises Raphael for the range and power of his imagination in reproducing classic and religious themes; but if we apply strictly Mr. Berenson's definition of illustration, that "it appeals to us for the value the thing has elsewhere (than in the painting)," then this representation of the themes of antiquity has *no* value, for painting. His definition of decoration, as the "intrinsic"



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appeal of a work of art, apart from all interpretations of subject-matter, implies that a picture is a combination of what is meaningless with what is irrelevant.

Mr. Berenson's reasoning ignores the facts that the form of a picture is always an embodiment of what the artist finds essential in some part of the real world, and that it is the distinction of the greatest artists that they give us what is essential and not what is adventitious; but there is no means of making a distinction between what is essential and what is adventitious unless we have in mind the object or situation represented. The artist gives us what is essential in plastic terms. Hence to judge his form we must have a clear grasp of the medium of painting, so that we can say whether or not it has been fully utilized—whether or not there has been overaccentuation or undue reliance upon any one plastic element. Art is expression, and the expression is always *of* something, and *by* means appropriate to the particular art in question. Mr. Berenson's isolation of these two aspects into separate compartments represents not an art judgment but the common human weakness that seeks to avoid a personal reaction in which we are ourselves obliged to go through the process of creative interpretation which resulted in the original experience of the artist. Psychologically, it is akin to that form of academicism in ethics that tries to judge a moral act in abstraction from the two essentials, the individual and the consequences.

In contrast to Mr. Berenson's implied view, we are contending that to appreciate a work of art, or any other manifestation of human instinct acting intelligently, we are obliged to put ourselves into the situation out of which the work of art sprang, and reproduce the artist's vision of it. This is a difficulty from which the academician shrinks; hence he resorts to the easy mechanical classifications. The shrinking takes the form of judging the factors or aspects in isolation, not as elements in an organic whole. It divides form from expression, just as it divides composition from color, and color from modeling, and in consequence it cannot judge any of them aesthetically. It is only when we have seen what grasp of the world the artist is undertaking to set forth that we can say whether his work is important as an embodiment of human values, or whether he has succeeded in integrating the plastic means to make an intrinsically moving plastic form.

This criterion exposes the falsity of Mr. Berenson's estimate

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of Raphael's greatness even from the point of view of illustration. He writes: "The central Italian painters were not only among the profoundest and grandest, but among the most pleasing and winning illustrators that we Europeans have ever had." On the contrary, the cheapness of Raphael's means is reflected in the melodramatic character of his scenes, the softness and sweetness of his personages, the exaggeration of his spatial effects. His classic themes become mere suaveness, his religious themes, sugariness, when contrasted with similar themes rendered with the power of Michel Angelo, the dignity of Giotto, the other-worldliness of El Greco. As we have seen in our "Introduction," any deficiency in the ability to achieve plastic embodiment results in a loss of human values in subject-matter; examples of this are found in Delacroix, Böcklin and Millet. In Giorgione, Titian, Rembrandt, or Renoir, great plastic genius is expressed in forms which are deeply impregnated with human values, and these human values determine the proportion in which the plastic means are used, so that the forms cannot be appreciated or judged unless we retain our contact with what is expressed.

Mr. Berenson's classification entirely overlooks the important factor of decoration as it really exists in paintings. There is a general decorative texture in Paolo Veronese, in Rubens, in the Eighteenth Century French painters, and in Renoir, which constitutes an important ingredient of the aesthetic effect, but which is not particularly expressive of the essential character of the individual thing portrayed. When we say that Cézanne is stronger than Renoir, but that in Renoir there is a greater wealth of charm, we mean that in Renoir there is present much of this decorative element that is relatively absent in Cézanne. That distinction is unintelligible according to Berenson's principles, since both painters have the intrinsic values which he lumps together under the head of "decoration." Nor indeed do his principles permit of any appreciation of either Renoir or Cézanne, because both of those artists can be understood only by realizing that they, like Giorgione and Titian, and indeed like Giotto, achieve their effects chiefly through the organizing power of color. To that fundamental principle he never even refers, and the long series of his judgments shows that he has never in any degree understood or felt the force of it.

Mr. Berenson's work deals not with the objective facts that enter into an appreciation of art-values, but with a form of anti-



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quarianism made up of historical, social, and sentimental interests entirely adventitious to plastic art. It would be unworthy of serious attention except for the regrettable influence his writings have had in filling our universities with bad teaching on art and our public galleries with bad Italian paintings. The courses in art at practically all the universities and colleges in America are based upon the obsolete psychology, the unscientific method of approach that make it impossible for students to obtain either a grasp of aesthetic essentials or a real and personal experience with works of art. The instruction offered at such institutions is a mixture of spurious sentiment and historical data, elaborated into a system that has no relevancy to either the plastic values in painting or the principles of scientific education. Even worse is the fact that this deplorable tradition is given currency among the general public by books such as Professor Langfeld's and Professor Mather's, which offer in the name of public education in art something which has nothing to do with art or with education. This academic instruction, given both in the classroom and in popular books, is largely responsible for the confusion of values which has made the public the victim of sentimentalists and antiquarians who breathe with religious awe the names of great painters whose work they never understood.

Mr. Berenson has aided materially in the identification of the works of some of the early Italian painters by means of investigations that are primarily and fundamentally akin to those of handwriting experts. Interesting as that work has been in itself, it has yielded no data relevant to an appreciation of the values that make paintings works of art. Indeed, the principal effects of the activities of handwriting-experts in the field of art have been bad ones. They have resurrected the names of a number of early, and very bad, Italian painters whose work the picture-dealers sell accompanied by an expert's certificate of authenticity; in other words, antiquity, not aesthetic merit, has become the guide in a traffic in the kind of pictures which George Moore calls "cock-eyed saints painted on gold backgrounds." The host of bad paintings in the public galleries of Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit, and other cities and especially in the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia, show the sad results of the expert-dealer-author-university method of propagating counterfeit thinking and counterfeit art.

The especially lamentable feature of the whole system is that

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the fetish-worship is so intrenched and buttressed by prestige that it is a waste of time to suggest that a more rational method of studying art be employed. Recently, we made a first-hand study of the facilities, the personnel, the equipment, and the practical results upon the students, in the department of art in one of the largest and best-known American colleges, whose courses are founded upon the kind of psychology and educational practices above analyzed. The revelations of the study were so representative of intellectual and educational disorder, of such widespread social and economic significance, that my colleague, Mr. Laurence Buermeyer, described the incident in his recent book *The Aesthetic Experience*. On page 165 of that book Mr. Buermeyer writes: "Recently one of the American colleges applied for an opportunity to provide its students with first-hand acquaintance with a very large and representative collection of works of plastic art. The collection, in range and quality, is without parallel in America; its owner, however, considered that it could be fruitfully studied only by those possessing an intelligent conception of human nature and of aesthetic principles. Compliance with the request was therefore accompanied by the condition that the college should coöperate to provide such a background; the coöperation involved, on the college's part, no more than a statement of the instruction already given, a statement sufficiently detailed to make possible a plan for such supplementation as might seem necessary. The college itself was not asked to provide the additional instruction, which would have been furnished as a part of the collection's resources, nor was it asked to modify in any way its existing courses in art. Nevertheless, the information sought was refused, apparently on the ground that to give it would have involved an admission that the instruction already offered might not be all-sufficient. Thus are day-dreams sheltered from the destructive action of facts.

"The incident is striking because of the extraordinary contrast it presents between profession and actual practice, between the intelligent open-mindedness which may reasonably be expected of an institution devoted to the advancement of learning and education, and the somnambulistic adherence to precedent actually displayed. But it is not unique. It is a symptom of the entrenchment of vested interest and unchangeable habits which are as destructive to art as they are to life in general."



### III

## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

THE arrangement of the succeeding analyses follows in the main the order of discussion in the text. However, the correspondence is not exact: a number of painters whose pictures are analyzed are not mentioned in the general discussion, and the order of arrangement of these has been determined chiefly by convenience.

Since the discussions in this Appendix are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive, no attempt has been made to deal fully with all the pictures referred to. Many pictures which would in themselves repay extended comment are dismissed with only a few words, by which attention is called to their more important or less obvious characteristics.

The following abbreviations indicate the collections in which the pictures analyzed may be found. Names of churches are not abbreviated, nor are those of private collections:

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|---|---|
| <i>A.C.</i> Andrea del Castagno Museum,<br>Florence.    | <i>N.</i> National Gallery, London.             |
| <i>A.V.</i> Academy, Venice.                            | <i>P.</i> Pitti, Florence.                      |
| <i>B.</i> Borghese, Rome.                               | <i>Pr.</i> Prado, Madrid.                       |
| <i>B.F.</i> Barnes Foundation, Merion,<br>Pennsylvania. | <i>S.M.</i> Museum of San Marco, Flor-<br>ence. |
| <i>L.</i> Louvre, Paris.                                | <i>U.</i> Uffizi, Florence.                     |
| <i>M.</i> Metropolitan Museum, New<br>York.             | <i>V.</i> Museum of the Vatican,<br>Rome.       |
|   | <i>W.</i> Wallace Collection, London.           |

### THE ASSISI GIOTTOS

In all these frescoes, the color is fresh, rich, and free from stridency. It constitutes an infinite number of designs in itself, through relations of harmony and contrast. (See note on immediate effect of color forms in *An Approach to Art*, by Mary Mullen, page 21.) In its totality it forms a pervasive color-glow of great richness and equally great delicacy and charm: it is made up of red and golden-yellow, contrasted and yet merged with a light, pervasive blue that in its very blueness is a unique sensuous experience. In composition, there is a free use of architectural figures, effective as masses in relation to total design, which are interesting in themselves as patterns;

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the second interest does not compete with the first but reinforces it. The figures, masses, etc., placed apparently at random, never seem dispersed or scattered but always form a unity. The figures when grouped are rhythmic, their movements are easy, graceful, and convincing (that is, they are doing something both real and individually characteristic: they are intent but not exaggeratedly so to the point of melodrama). The coloring of the figures is varied: it is bright in some, merely tonal in others, but there is always variety and harmony within the figure, and the color of the figure as a whole fits perfectly into the general color-design. There is a rather rigid handling of the figures, though it does not interfere with their fluid but quiet movement. The movement appears both in the figures as wholes and in their gestures, and it forms a design in itself.

The three-dimensional character is prominent but not engrossing: the rounded solidity of the objects adds to their reality. It is achieved not only through use of modeling, but by marvelously expressive line, brought into a linear pattern of intrinsic value, and also by a color-design which is in itself charming. The perspective is fully adequate to give depth to the picture, with a corresponding increase in effectiveness, but it is never over-accentuated. It is a perspective rather indicated than rendered in detail; the economy and simplicity, however, do not detract but rather add. They show use of comparatively primitive means to secure maximum of effect, effect which equals or surpasses that achieved by later men with much more elaborate means. (This fact is an illustration of the wide difference between artistic power and technical competence or repertory of resources.)

The background swims in an atmosphere of pervasive, silvery, crystalline delicacy, in which objects seem to be floating ethereally. This greatly heightens the mystical effect, and is an illustration of Giotto's consummate power of adjusting plastic means to narrative and human values. This delicate pervasive mysticism is akin to that of many of the best Chinese painters; it is greatly augmented by the use of light, of which Giotto was a supreme master, both in modeling of figures and in vivifying atmosphere. The light is reinforced by the color, which pervades the atmosphere just as does the light, instead of being confined to the landscape, shut in between the lines demarcating actual material objects. When, as in the "Miraculous Production of a Spring of Water," he uses light dramatically, he achieves a reality, a fluffy, fleecelike effect, of great delicacy. The drama is never overdone, and the delicacy does not detract from the force and dignity.

In these frescoes, there is not the conventional central mass with balancing features on either side. An obviously displaced main figure is brought into relation with the other parts of the canvas by a series of rhythmic lines, colors, or masses which save the picture from being one-sided or disjointed. Giotto can use color livened up with light, or other means of variation, and make it function as a balancing mass; he can do the same thing with rhythmic lines, so that an arresting design of line or color often plays the part of a balancing mass in composition. This use of color in composition seems to



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have been overlooked by the critics: its recognition illustrates the need of making design central in the analysis of a picture, and judging each of the means by the part it plays in the design. In Giotto, in other words, a displaced or decentered object does not fix our attention on itself, and does not frustrate our demand for balance.

**St. Francis, Supporting the Lateran, Appears to Pope Innocent III.** The Pope is asleep in the small shelter which is made up of straight columns. Most of the narrative is in that part of the painting and occupies about one-half of the surface. On the left is a temple set obliquely, which should, by all the conventional rules of composition, be disapproved. Instead, by the very arrangement of lines in oblique fashion, making an interplay of planes, the left side is especially striking and an integral part in the design; it attracts our attention equally with the right side of the picture, in spite of the wealth of plastic detail there displayed. To give added interest to the left side, but chiefly to call attention to the awry building, a life-size figure is placed in a conventional position. The figure is lightly done, with such complete freedom from accentuation of detail that its unobtrusiveness makes it perfectly fit for the plastic function of tying up the composition, to which function its mass, line, and color are adjusted. This is a supreme triumph of line-composition of a novel character. The unexpected is also the inevitable.

In the foregoing, use of mass in composition is illustrated. The rôle of color is shown strikingly in **St. Francis Restores His Apparel to His Father.** This picture too is obviously in two halves, but in this case there is no figure, object, or mass to effect a union between the two halves, each a group of figures. The connecting link between them is color, which, beginning as atmosphere in the space between the main figures in the respective halves, is a thing of independent value, apart from its function in tinting the garments. It is made interesting by a slight lighting in the foreground, and extends to the deep beyond, where we see the horizon; our attention is carried up into the sky and brought back in the center of the picture to the vertical plane which forms the foreground. This functional unifying use of color, effective in a degree rarely approached by other painters, gives with admirable success a sense of infinity. It is the absence of any such unifying means which makes the Botticelli Sistine fresco of somewhat the same double design fall apart. The fact that color is not an integral part of the structure never bothers us: the form and the color are so perfectly combined and realized that, though not welded into a single structural unit, they blend harmoniously, and they are separable only when abstracted and analyzed.

Giotto's mastery of line is of the same degree as his mastery of composition. His line is terse, simple, powerful, and in the highest degree expressive and personally distinctive. His three-dimensional effects do not stand forth as do those of Michel Angelo and especially of Leonardo, but give a simple, balanced, convincing rounded fullness. In him indeed, the realization of form and movement culminates. This achievement, masterful but unobtru-

## THE PADUA GIOTTOS

sive, is due to the use of all the plastic means, that is, line, light, color, atmosphere, and mass, all blended to realize a sense of tranquillity, peace, reality and of the dignity, infinity, and mystery of religion.

There is also in a very high degree the use of design within design which serves to add variety to unity. Any object or group of objects, looked at either in itself or with relation to surrounding objects, functions rhythmically, both in itself as a part of the group in which it is a unit, and with relation to other coördinate groups; this means balance, harmony, etc.

**St. Francis's Vision of a Palace and Weapons.** The composition hangs together perfectly, although theoretically impossible of unification. The two figures and their milieu, red, blue, all swim in an imperceptible atmosphere of color, but the dominant note of the figure-setting is blue. The palace at the right side is red and ivory, but here the dominant note is red. The composition is unified by means of these contrasting colors, joined by ivory bands, at right angles to the columns of the canopy; also by strips of the dominant blue note which is the setting of the group, which extend in two horizontal lines and form the roofs of the two upper porticoes of the palace, a deeper blue in the second roof, and a pale blue, in which an ivory note dominates in the first. These color-areas tie this picture together not only as a plastic unit in its entirety but in regard to any of its contributory elements, such as line or mass. The chief agent in the unification is color.

The last point to be emphasized with reference to these pictures is the combination of plastic means with expression, with grasp of the essence of what is presented. Giotto is not photographic in his realism: everything is so finely rendered that we get essences rather than details: that is, the spirit, the basic feeling of the objects is depicted. This is true even in the pictures in which the details are shown. It is true of the religious aspect, the solemnity and mystery; it is also true of more mundane things, of the material objects and human events depicted.

An example is **St. Francis Clothing the Poor.** The effect in this is increased by the simplicity of the means used, the minimum of external objects which are obviously interesting or arresting; in spite of this simplicity the picture is of epic bigness. Indeed, this picture shows the universality of Giotto's genius in another aspect: it presents us with the grandeur and majesty of nature in landscape, in a manner worthy of Claude, and at a time when the aesthetic aspect of nature was so generally overlooked that only a man of the most original genius could have become aware of it.

In **St. Francis and the Birds**, the ability to render the spirit of place, in a lyric vein, as Sisley did later, is manifested. In this picture design is paramount, and is achieved by line and all-pervasive color, atmosphere, and glow.

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The first effect of these later pictures is not so overpowering as at Assisi, but is more suave, fluid, dainty. The reason may be that they are smaller in size, but more probably is that they are formal and symmetrical in compo-



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sition. In the Assisi compositions all the rules of symmetry, as ordinarily accepted, are so disregarded that the problem of unifying disparate elements is enormously increased in difficulty. In the Padua pictures, though there is apparent diversity, the general scheme of arrangement is more conventional: the elements are placed with reference to a center mass, and variety is accomplished rather by variation in the subject-matter. Though the intrinsic value of these compositions is great, the effect of novelty and power is diminished by the relatively stereotyped character of the composition.

The use of architectural elements is continued, but their rôle is changed. They are no longer part of the central design, but function as background, not as the main masses of the composition, to be balanced against groups of persons. Figures and animals have become the chief compositional masses. Their unity is perfect, but the relegation of architecture and landscape to a position of secondary importance produces a loss in boldness and originality, and also in simplicity. The loss may be seen if we compare the Padua "Entry into Jerusalem" and "Flight into Egypt" with the Assisi "Flight into Egypt."

Though less simple, the Padua pictures also show the power of securing great effects with simplicity of means. The masses themselves, considered as compositional units, are not really very varied, but they owe their power to the infinite variety with which they are employed and put in relation with one another. In the "Descent from the Cross," the basic compositional design is the oval made by Christ and the four figures; in "Joachim's Vision," it is essentially the same; yet in their entirety these two pictures seem radically different. Such effectiveness conjoined with economy of means is to be found subsequently in Rembrandt and Velasquez, and occasionally in Titian and Tintoretto.

The color is less jewel-like, and it is not so combined with atmosphere to give the pervasive effect which forms a great part of the charm of the Assisi pictures, and which contributes so much to the effect of mysticism. In this again there is a descent in power and originality. But there is the same perfect success in integrating subject-matter and plastic means, the mark of which is the fact that a spectator sensitive to plastic values is able to get the narrative or human values without knowing the story related—the essence of the drama without the details.

This may be seen supremely illustrated in **Joseph and Mary Returning After Their Marriage**. Here we get the specific and powerful effect of a solemn procession, given in the most dignified manner by grouping and spacing both between the individual groups and the figures in them. Line, color, mass, all seem imbued with the central idea of procession. No element is overdone—we are conscious of nothing but a rhythmic, measured, orderly movement from one side of the picture to the other, to which all the elements contribute. The pervasive color, akin to that of Chinese painting, characteristic of the earlier pictures is here retained, and it gives a sense of an

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infinite sky in the background without obvious accentuation of perspective: everything swims in an aura of silvery light blue which conveys the infinity of space better than any amount of ordinary perspective. The aërial ambience to be seen in Masaccio is here forecast (though the effect may be due to age). It is a perfect example, one of the best in existence, of conveying a central psychological idea (in this case that of procession) through representation in a painting in which all the plastic elements converge and unify about that idea.

**Christ Bearing the Cross.** Compare this picture with Simone Martini's "The Ascent to Calvary": dignified, expressive color, figures, and architectural elements give a convincing and powerful story. In this we get simplicity, dignity, drama, majesty, rendered with an effect of peace, while in the Martini we get the sense of turmoil, executed in brilliant colors and with a tendency towards the melodramatic. There is analogy here with the relative ability of Tintoretto and of Delacroix to tell a story: Tintoretto is able to do so in genuinely plastic terms, but Delacroix is always obliged to have recourse to adventitious aids. With this picture, it is absolutely unnecessary to know anything about the ostensible subject to feel the deep sense of mystic power, grandeur, majesty; in short, of religion in its broadest sense. Every relevant detail of this experience is given adequate plastic embodiment.

**Descent from the Cross.** In this there is the same use of a wall to divide the picture that there is in Botticelli's "Moses Kills the Egyptian." In the latter, however, the two halves are separated by an unbridged abyss. There is no unity either on a first inspection or after analysis. In this, the wall is perfectly merged in the general composition: it may be looked upon as a reinforcing mass, to frame in both the figures which enter into the narrative and the various plastic elements in the front of the picture. The wall is both a focal area in the composition and an independent source of interest in the design; because of the legitimacy of both these purposes it has none of the effect of disturbance and distraction which we find in the Botticelli.

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**Scenes from the Life of St. Umiltà (U.).** This picture shows how the Sieneese School utilized the Byzantine ancona tradition, which in Cimabue is chiefly restricted to figure painting. The perspective is taken over at about the stage reached by Giotto. The color is dry, laid on, and the feeling for color is poor in general, except in the lower part of the ancona on the extreme right.

**Birth of John the Baptist (School of Pietro Lorenzetti) (L.).** The composition is evidently influenced by Giotto. In color, the red in the bedspread and the ivory, light blue, light green, and red of the woman in bed and the other figures make up a pleasing combination that goes well with the general composition.



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### SIMONE MARTINI

**The Ascent to Calvary (L.).** This picture owes its chief charm to brilliant color, successfully varied as means for reinforcing the obvious drama conveyed by lines indicating positive movement.

### MANNI

**The Adoration of the Magi (L.).** The color is deeply felt, with a tendency towards structural use, and charmingly varied. This color is bright in the figures, rather dark (brown and green) in the background; it is juicy everywhere. It is essentially illustration done in adequate plastic terms, but with no great power beyond its value as illustration.

### PISANELLO

**The Vision of St. Eustace (N. G.).** The background is a succession of dark greens and browns varied with spots of white (animals). This is a beautiful example of the effect obtained by the Japanese method of practically abolishing perspective, representing it by almost perpendicular planes, instead of planes receding into the distance. In this representation of perspective by substitutes, or what the French critics term "equivalents," it resembles the Persian miniatures also.

### THE FLORENTINE SCHOOL

The Florentine School began with Giotto. It was not until the work of Masaccio, however, that a fully developed Florentine "form" can be distinguished. The preceding painters, who belonged to the school, represent the transition from medieval art. The transition period, subsequent to Giotto, may best be illustrated by Fra Angelico. Prior to him we have the Giottoesque tradition well employed in Orcagna's **Coronation of the Virgin**. Giotto's contribution is here shown in terms of color (which later became Fra Angelico's), with Giotto's means in attaining three-dimensional character. The expression in this picture, while not excessively accentuated, is felt to be too much an element.

### LORENZO MONACO

The Florentine tradition is again exemplified with marked retrogression and overaccentuation in Lorenzo Monaco's **Virgin and Child with Four Saints (U.)**. In this the design is built around religious themes, speciously reinforced by Gothic architectural features. (This use of adventitious means, non-integrated detail, to convey an idea is parallel to Tschaikowsky's, in "Overture, 1812." See pages 48-49.) The actual effect is only decorative, as is also the use of feebly felt and only slightly moving color. The feebleness of the color and the general weakness of the picture are compensated for in





Lotiron

Barnes Foundation

Similar in design to numerous paintings by Titian, Poussin and other old masters.





Chinese—Twelfth Century

Barnes Foundation





Demuth

Barnes Foundation

Similar in plastic form to the Chinese painting on opposite page.





Cézanne

Barnes Foundation

Analysis, page 488



## FRA ANGELICO

some degree by the successful use of linear rhythm; but the picture remains essentially a decoration, reverting, in point of realism and naturalism, to a stage before Giotto and nearer Cimabue.

### FRA ANGELICO

**Descent from the Cross** (*S.M.*). The composition and drawing of this picture, as well as the general feeling, are obviously derived from the Sienese. The color is Lorenzo Monaco's, but is poorer because of its garishness. In the drawing there is also a reminiscence of Giotto, but it is emotionally overcharged, with an effect of perfervid pietism. The result of this is affectation because of the inadequate plastic support. In the whole of the picture, there is a dearth of originality. Perspective shows the influence of Masaccio, but the details in the distant landscape, instead of being blurred, are emphasized in their distinctness; consequently all realistic effect is lost, and the landscape is merely a patterned setting for the religious theme. The modeling is less subtle than in Giotto or Piero della Francesca. The spacing of groups is often unsuccessful: the groups as a whole play a part in the composition, but the figures in them have little distinction or compositional rôle. The result is flatness, to which the uniformity of the haloes contributes: there is monotony, lack of fluidity, grace, or rhythm. The color, at its best, is fresh, delicate and charmingly harmonized, but it is not used very successfully either compositionally or structurally. What plastic value the picture has is due chiefly to the spots of color, contained in simple, graceful lines.

**Transfiguration, from Life of Jesus** (*S.M.*). A flood of light is distributed uniformly over the picture, with shadows few and rather conventional. The color is very good, but pleasing rather than powerful. The figure has design, and the use of the mass in connection with light and color yields a good plastic unity and a real effect of power.

**Crucifixion** (*S.M.*). In this picture there is a comparative absence of Fra Angelico's usually overloaded sentiment, and the expressiveness in consequence is really dignified and convincing. Plastically, the picture is a success. The formal relations in general are good, especially the graceful wave that starts at one end of the group of figures and extends, with well-proportioned breaks in continuity, to the other end of the picture. This is a varied, convincing, and excellently spaced group, in which each figure has plenty of room and is related to each other figure in an effective rhythm. The modeling recalls Giotto: the unobtrusive contrast of light and shadow gives a successfully rounded three-dimensional form. The color is beautifully varied, a harmonious design of pleasing shades applied in various patterns. All the plastic elements are well combined to form an exceedingly rich ensemble. Fra Angelico shows here that in an impressive conception, charged with deep human values, he is more than an eclectic, although it would be difficult to find any single element in the composition that cannot be referred to a prototype.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

It is possible—though this is only a hypothesis—that a good deal of the charm of this picture is due to its restoration by an artist who had a greater feeling for reality than Fra Angelico. This theory is fortified by the quality of the color, which is juicy and not acid, and by the success with which the faces are realized as three-dimensional forms, especially as there is no visible display of the means by which this is accomplished. In some instances, the manner of modeling is reminiscent of Domenico Veneziano and Piero della Francesca.

### MASACCIO

**Frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel.**<sup>1</sup> Masaccio represents a much greater advance upon his predecessors than any painter in the interval between Giotto and himself. He is a departure from Giotto in his color, drawing, spacing, and in his tendency to balance symmetrically by vertical lines, usually architectural. In this last respect, the contrast is greater with the Assisi Giottos than with those at Padua.

What strikes us most strongly about Masaccio is his increasing realism or naturalism. His drawing is more expressive of natural movement than that of his predecessors, very simple, with freedom from sharp line. His figures look more like actual people. There is a tendency to dramatic expression amounting in most cases to intentness rather than to melodrama. The realistic effect contains a suggestion of Velasquez, in spite of the distinction from Velasquez's sharp-cut, crystalline clearness and bright color: in both there is ability to catch the essence of a thing.

The composition is more balanced than in Giotto, though still far from academic balance. The use of architectural masses in the background continues, especially in a manner characteristic of the Padua Giottos, with the architectural features of great depth and dignity; they are, however, more realistically treated than in Giotto's compositions, with less of the effect of other-worldliness. The debt to Giotto is again shown in the position of the heads of the figures with reference to the necks, and in the relation of each head to the others, especially in **St. Peter Raising Tabitha**. In this same picture, the figures in the center form a group, subdivided into three smaller groups of two each, with unequal spaces between these groups. This accentuates the interest of the group as a whole and forms the apex of a sort of pyramid, directing the attention to the sloping figures on either side. The total effect is of a well-lighted, effective rhythmic group.

Masaccio's drawing is terse and expressive, but his line is not clear-cut like Giotto's. Its blurred effect rather recalls Titian, with shaded contours rather than sharp outlines. Though on the whole less highly developed, the draughtsmanship compares very favorably with that of Rembrandt, Daumier, Goya, Pascin; it is realistic in the best sense, that is, imaginatively realistic.

Masaccio's color as a whole is somber. It pervades the whole atmosphere

<sup>1</sup> Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.

## MASACCIO

as in Giotto; the atmosphere is so much heavier, however, that it seems to assume the proportions of a haze akin to the Venetian glow, though it is rather a murky atmospheric veil than a suffusion of color. This atmosphere suggests Rembrandt, though the chiaroscuro is much less: what does the work is the combination of light and color. It serves, however, the same effects of mysticism and dignity. In general the color is good, though not brilliant or very varied; it is austere, and perfectly merged in the general dignity of the treatment.

The perspective is increasingly precise as compared with Giotto's, in which perspective is not accentuated. The atmospheric veil or haze suggests the manner of the impressionists rather than the clear-cut spacing of Raphael and Perugino. Aërial perspective is shown in the blur in the objects in the middle distance as compared with the relative clarity of those in the foreground: this rendering of the effects of distance as we have them in actual life again suggests the work of the impressionists, and further illustrates Masaccio's realistic tendency.

Light is used both in modeling to give three-dimensional character, and to form a design. The solidity represents an advance upon Giotto: the accentuation of light is greater, and in this respect also a new step is taken towards realism. Giotto's figures are also perfectly real, in the sense of aesthetically and plastically convincing, but they are more other-worldly. The use of light to make a pattern and aid in unifying the composition is well illustrated in the fresco, **St. Peter Healing the Sick**. The light begins feebly at the right side of the picture, increases in intensity towards the left, and becomes concentrated on the two sitting figures at the left. These are illuminated as by a spotlight, but with such success that the dramatic effect, while very powerful, is kept free from melodrama. The larger of the two figures is uniformly bathed in light, while on the smaller the light is concentrated, with an effect approaching Rembrandt's chiaroscuro. The light also merges with the color-effects, in that it enlivens the otherwise rather dull uniform brown of the picture. The degree of its merging is shown by the relation it bears to the color directly, to the color combined with it to form an atmosphere which aids in space-composition, to the composition, to the modeling, and to the expression of subject-matter. In this last it aids both directly, by singling out the important figures, and indirectly, through the effect of dignity, mysticism, and religious feeling to which the atmosphere contributes. It is thus both a design in itself, and a reinforcement of every other design. This is what is meant by the perfect merging which constitutes plastic form at its best.

The most important of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel is **The Tribute Money**. In this there is a design of moving power and deeply mystic character, which depends primarily on the floating, aërial character of the entire picture, achieved by a perfect merging of all the plastic means. The effect is one of great dignity. The unity of the picture is balanced by infinitely varied interior patterns of light, color, line, etc. The people



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

seem to float in the air, though their feet are firmly planted on the ground. There is no lack of realism, as in Cimabue and Fra Angelico. Lightness of touch everywhere, gestures, simplified impressionistic drawing; in all a sort of supernatural effect which is pervasive and achieved by no one demonstrable means.

The unification of the picture is accomplished by a merging of the groups of figures with the landscape through use of a filmy, floating color-effect reminiscent of Giotto. The central figures are so placed that the space functions between them, but it is a space filled with a veil of atmosphere. This roomy, aërial space-composition adds greatly to the general design, without being in any way such an overaccentuation as Perugino's. This picture shows the futility of the academic conception of a composition balanced by the use of bilaterally symmetrical large masses. Here there are on the right a house and two life-sized figures, with no compensating figures on the left side; instead, on the left side there is a landscape of the same general color-tone as the house on the right (an instance of composition through the use of color), together with a very small kneeling figure on the extreme left. These function to give us the sense of balance, and the added charm on this left side of a beautifully achieved atmospheric landscape to increase the aesthetic satisfaction.

The color is rather conventional and dull when compared with Giotto's or Piero della Francesca's. The drawing, as above noted with reference to Masaccio in general, recalls Rembrandt, Goya, and Daumier. It is formal, that is, less terse than in these other painters, but attains the same solidity as, for example, in the legs of the central figure, shown with his back towards the spectator and his face in profile. These legs have a monumentally solid character, of a more legitimate pictorial quality than the sculptural modeling in Michel Angelo's painting. The gowns are filmy, though not so much so as in Giotto, because he did not have so light a hand and lacked Giotto's jewel-like color. The light is generally well distributed, and so arranged in the sky and background that it gives a repeated succession of dramatic effects which harmonize with the dramatic actions in the group. Movement, form, space, solidity, expression—all are completely realized.

This picture is as satisfactory a rendering of a story as is possible through the use of plastic means. Many other pictures are greater as technical accomplishments, and show more skillful use of light, line, color, etc., but there seems to be an ability of Masaccio to express his deep feelings in terms comprehensible to us. Like Giotto, Titian, Renoir, and Cézanne, he was a great artist because he had *something to say*—that is, something of universal human value—and because he said it in plastic terms.

### ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO

**St. Eustasius** (A.C.) (attributed to School of Andrea del Castagno), central figure with four smaller pictures at the corners. This picture is a combination of the usual brightness, freshness, and jewel-like quality of the

## ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO

fresco form with an added note of power. This is to be seen in every part of the picture, and is akin to the power in Michel Angelo's Sistine frescoes. It is due in part, but only in part, to the use of darker color than is usual in fresco-painting. It is achieved mainly by a series of internal patterns in which each of the elements, color, line, light and space enter in the form of a swirl. The swirl is larger than that of Rubens, and unlike his has no tendency to be dominated by color. It produces a design or pattern of far greater strength, dramatic and aesthetic quality, than anything of Rubens.

The central figure in the middle part of the picture has the hardness characteristic of sculpture, although rendered in pictorial terms. The placing of the figure in a niche heightens this effect, but the rigid, stiff, hard quality is independent of the placing. The pervasive quality of power is attained by the use of distortions in the position and contour of legs, arms, etc., but there is no overemphasis or overaccentuation. The painting gives the abstract effect of strength and vigor in terms fully plastic.

The upper right-hand panel is too much destroyed to study in detail, but one feels the fresco form in its largest sense of power merged with delicacy. This double effect is also present in a very high degree in the upper left-hand panel, with its quality of a Persian miniature, with all the feeling of Chinese Twelfth and Thirteenth Century painting, rhythmic, fluid use of line and space. Added charm arises from the fact that that which is lovely, delicate, and powerful is done in a small space, and by means of color. The rugged power of the picture is so perfectly in solution that it blends with the pervasive delicacy to constitute a distinctive and charming form.

The lower right-hand panel is a fine realization of space-composition, each element in the group harmonizing with each other to form a unit in itself, with that unit in ordered relationship with every other mass, such as the sky and the house. The wooden character of the bull, for instance, which gives a static effect, is duplicated in the bearded figure on the right, and probably serves as a foil to accentuate the movement of the center figure. The influence of Masaccio on this central figure of the group is very pronounced in the expressive, terse line, modeled with light and shade in Masaccio's manner, with the resemblance extending even to technique. Similar effects, accomplished by different means and in a very different manner, later appear in such men as Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier, Renoir, Glackens, and Pascin. This part of the picture forms a beautiful design of rhythmic lines, ordered space, charming delicate color of great power, through not of great brightness. There is fine realization of perspective in the landscape. The tendency of this part of the picture is to simplification of means, with increased expressiveness. All the figures seem to be actually doing something. The effect is obtained partly by distortions, a fact which shows the futility of reproaching the modern painters for their use of similar distortions. The composite effect is of overwhelming reality, in spite of the absence of any effort to imitate the photographic rendering of flesh, texture, features, etc. The realism resembles Masaccio's, as above noted. In it



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the varied use of shadow plays a large part, and throughout there is the delicacy and charm which characterized the previous Florentines, including Giotto. The total form of the picture is one of the utmost reality, power, and delicacy, accomplished by a dignified, balanced, simplified use of color, light, and line.

**Pietà (A.C.).** This gives the same impression of moving aesthetic power, achieved by simple means: it is suggestive of Michel Angelo, but is without muscular accentuations. The source of its power is mainly the wonderful relations between various masses, spaces, etc.

### DOMENICO VENEZIANO

**Virgin and Child (U.).** The design is interesting but formal; the colors are light—pink, red, and blue; the picture is finely organized, with a very expressive line; the religious emotion is accentuated. Piero's debt is clearly shown in the extreme right-hand figure, with its clear-cut, Greek—Van Eyck profile. The third dimension is realized by subtle suggestions of light and shadow with very faint indications of color, so subtly merged that light and shadow and color are scarcely distinguishable even on a close examination. Static, impassive quality of quiet, deep contentment is also seen as in Piero, though the latter's color is infinitely more deeply felt and convincing.

### PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA

**Reception by Solomon.<sup>1</sup>** The design is founded upon a sharp division of the two sides of the picture, each having a group of figures. There is no central figure or foreground object to serve as connecting link. Here, as in other divisions into two halves, he recalls Giotto, and uses similar means of unification. (See notes on Giotto.) The landscape is a setting for the group rather than a thing in itself. Quiet green and purplish gray—cool—give the landscape its function as subduing background for the more brightly colored figures in foreground of left group.

Right side is a picture in itself—interior of room, architectural features and textures of wall, marble, colored stone, etc., act as setting for a rhythmic group all in wonderful, quiet, but bright colors. Solomon and woman to his left tie up the two groups of figures in that room. Whole picture—cool, oh so cool, in feeling as well as in color. Piero is a new note in art in that his color is cool and dry. The trees on the left side function strongly in carrying the picture up to the top, so that the left side too is like a room in its compositional value. In addition, these two trees with the groups at the bottom, in themselves of approximately equal height, and united by an undulating line of a hill in the middle distance, make a pyramidal mass. A central figure, of a child, seems to serve as the apex of a reverse pyramid, making a strong design.

<sup>1</sup> All of these pictures, except the last analyzed, are in the Church of San Francesco, Arezzo.

## PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA

Piero's space-composition is illustrated especially in the group dominated by the woman kneeling, in a blue robe. The figures, though close together in actual distance, are easily separable into units, and the space between these individual figures is easily felt as a rhythm. The group is a group and not a jumble.

The light is partly a general illumination, as in the group of kneeling women; it appears partly also by way of contrast, in which the feeling of shadow rather predominates, as in the figure just back of these kneeling women.

Function of color in the design: in the left side of the picture, the blue of the sky is always judiciously tempered and toned by light, so that it is never monotonous; these variations seem to increase the moving power of the color and reinforce its service as a mass, as the bond that ties the picture together compositionally. It is the skillful use of that color that enables him to divide his picture, often sharply, into an upper and a lower half, with all the action of the figures confined to the lower half. One never feels the two-ness or the separateness of the upper and lower parts. The halves go insensibly, gradually, one into the other.

In this picture there are various resemblances to the work of Van Eyck. In the heads of the women there is a similar clear-cut, cameo-like definition, but it is done in a broad simplified manner rather than with Van Eyck's detail. The resemblance appears also in the treatment of the robes, the quiet and static movement (real nevertheless), and especially in the man in a deep red gown just inside the temple and beside the column in the middle of the painting; also in Solomon's gown, but here there is more simplification and a more convincing reality. There is a diaphanous, filmy, lacy, delicate quality of especial charm, both in this robe and in the one on the kneeling woman.

**Rescue of the Cross.** The design is complex, the movement is accentuated by factitious aids, such as men using spears, but the feeling of turmoil is lacking. The drawing of figures is static, although ostensibly indicating movement. There is an absence of actuality and the form functions chiefly as design. Again we have an instance of plastic effect realized without resort to illustration. The design recalls Uccello, but it is simplified and modified: it is Uccello in solution. The figures are often grotesque looking, but this is probably intentional, to give interest to the design. The small tree functions as central unifying mass, as does the tree in the Chinese manner in Cosimo Rosselli's fresco in the Sistine Chapel. The clear-cut atmosphere with subtle feeling of haze recalls Masaccio, but with differences. The sky is superbly lighted, and made interesting by variously shaped clouds, which in themselves constitute a design. The eye travels from the left group to the sky and background in an oblique fashion, and comes down again to the right group forming an effective pyramidal design. The color is cool, lacking great depth, but it is made harmonious by the juxtaposition of various colors, yellow, red, blue, brown.

The dignified, static movement is an instance of impersonal, detached,



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unemotional rendering of a story told simply and with perfect control of plastic means. The contrast afforded by this picture to Raphael's softness and Delacroix's overemphasis on drama, shows that control of the plastic means makes it possible to give the essence of drama without reliance on overaccentuation or narrative or sentimental appeal.

**Discovery of the True Cross.** In this picture Giotto's influence is apparent, but subtly, in solution. The composition is sharply divided into right and left sides, that is, there is no central dominating figure, but the two sides are unified by the roof and hill in the middle distance. If we consider the left group, we find figures finely realized, each one dignified, doing something, quietly dramatic, beautifully but unobtrusively spaced. The color is pleasantly varied, with characteristic Piero tones. This note was afterwards taken over by Signorelli in the grouping of his Sistine fresco and the fresco in Orvieto Cathedral.

The right group in front of temple is rhythmic, quietly dramatic, fluid, even though gestures are sometimes stiff. The color is cool, with functions quite its own. Modeling of figures not obvious, but light and shade are nicely adjusted to that end. (Contrast with Leonardo.) The picture as a whole unifies, the cool color pervades and animates it throughout. Realism is here achieved by considerable detail but the effect is real, that is, simplified, nonphotographic. The color increases in effect as one continues to observe: the harmonious effect is due to its uniform dryness and coolness. Here as usual the light reinforces the color in Piero's unique way.

Extreme upper left-hand corner: the village swims in a crystal-clear atmosphere. There are many patterns made up of light in the compositional units, all merging into a unified design of light. The upper village is strongly lighted and balances well with group in front of the temple, also well lighted. The architectural feature on the right is a dominant mass which balances the village at the upper left. The keynote: cool, impersonal rendering of religious feeling, in the well-rendered plastic terms above noted, reinforced by accentuation of areas of bright color in the vital parts of the landscape, including the landscape back of the bridge.

The color is not staccato, as in Fra Angelico, not merged organically as in Titian, not merely laid on as in Ingres; but it is related to the figure in the same general manner as in Giotto, though with a less moving aesthetic effect.

**Exaltation of the Cross.** First effect recalls Giotto by reason of its rather pervasive color-tone, made up of harmoniously blended units, varied in color. The composition is again rather sharply divided into right and left groups, each group rhythmic in line and color. The right group of kneeling figures is not very successfully spaced, so that the group in the foreground functions rather as a single mass, but it is so skillfully varied in color of good quality that it is not a disturbing element. The picture unifies somewhat in the manner of Giotto, with a landscape carrying one back to the horizon and up again to the sky in the foreground. The relation between the sky

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and the landscape, with the help of the tree and the cross, unifies the picture. The cross obliquely placed and the tree at right angles also form in themselves a striking pattern.

The color is cool, calm, and the whole picture is dignified and simple; it achieves conviction by a dignified, nicely proportioned use of the plastic means.

**Death and Burial of Adam.** Rhythmic groups rather sharply divided as usual, but kept together by the tree, so that starting at the left side of the picture we get a succession of rhythmic lines and masses and planes which continues up to the tree. This can be studied in itself as a rhythmic organized group, with the interest of the design increased by the position of bodies, legs, etc. Supreme mastery of functional color is shown in this particular group, in the lovely bright red and blue, which makes the group strongly colorful, though this one figure is the only one with bright colors. Indeed the only other color-note in the group is a green in two of the small figures in the rear, very quiet, almost drab. Yet the color of the group is very powerful: it exemplifies greatness achieved by few and simple means. The same may be said of the group on the right side, where the central figure has a slight drapery of black, made into an interesting pattern. The background functions especially as a rich, swimming atmosphere, enriched by lines, variegated tones, colors, light and figures in the foreground. The landscape effect is itself wonderful.

**Marriage of St. Catherine** (School of Piero). The primary effect is that of a general fluid rhythm, made up of linear rhythms in individual figures, and fusing with the mottled background, which is also rhythmic. The general quality of the color is good, but inferior to that of the frescoes in the chancel, especially in the general feeling for color. The color in general is cool, but it is not used in the broad manner characteristic of fresco-painting. The composition is one-sided, that is, the tallest figure is placed to the right, but there is no sense of disturbance because the mottled rhythmic background continues above the head of the Madonna on the same line as the top of the tall figure. The group made up of the kneeling woman, baby, and Madonna is especially interesting as a composition, in which color functions strongly, as also in the robe of the man. It makes up a group of figures approximately equal in height. The infant is very striking because of the unusual design, involving some degree of deformation, and accentuated by light. That light forms a pyramidal pattern with the heads of the mother and the kneeling woman as the other two elements. There is a marked degree of solidity, achieved by the use of light and shadow with the light greatly predominating.

General summary: beautiful composition, very rhythmic; color soft, not garish; well proportioned in the form of a color-design, which has only three notes in it, light blue, red, and white. This painting is of interest because of its obvious relation to the Picasso acrobatic-circus series.

The examples of Piero della Francesca in the National Gallery are less



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successful than the Arezzo frescoes. In the following analysis the points of inferiority are noted.

**The Nativity of Our Lord with Angels Adoring (N.G.).** The influence of Domenico Veneziano is shown in the kneeling figure, and of Masaccio in the three figures side by side, one of whom has his hand raised. Landscape is very much in perspective, but details in rocks, trees, etc., are of the miniature type of Van Eyck, though with more clarity of atmosphere: there is an entire absence of Masaccio's aerial perspective. In the alternate use of light itself and dark masses, representing trees, grass, etc., there is a striking pattern, which runs from the center foreground all the way to the back of the landscape in the distance. This pattern is duplicated in the much smaller one on the right side back of the seated figure of Joseph. The color lacks the fine convincing quality of the Arezzo frescoes, and light is treated more realistically—more like actual sunshine—than in those in which it was rather a general lighting than a special use of sunlight. There is not the extremely cool detachment of the Arezzo pictures, and the figures are more Greek-like in feeling. Figures in general are light, and both they and the landscape are treated more nearly in the academic style of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.

### BOTTICELLI

**Destruction of Korah and Dathan and Abiram.**<sup>1</sup> General design: comparatively conventional means, which are less varied than in the neighboring picture by Signorelli. This is especially apparent in the composition, in which the middle ground and background are used chiefly as a setting for the figures; in these figures Botticelli's beautifully expressive line is the dominant note, but there is monotony by reason of the absence of other means. The rhythms are linear only, instead of being reinforced by light and color. The middle distance and background are not only relatively functionless, as just noted, but in pattern, composition, light, and color, are essentially stereotyped. The light in the background is more successfully used than in most of Botticelli's works, but the general effect is one of ostentation, straining after effect, and failing to realize it. The picture is an example of virtuosity without reality.

**Moses Kills the Egyptian.**<sup>1</sup> As usual with Botticelli, the design is founded on an obvious fluid rhythmic line, the strikingness of which is reinforced by bright color. This design, however, when the method of analysis into elements is applied and these elements are judged in reference to the plastic form as a whole, is clearly defective. The composition is sharply divided into two parts, with strong rhythmic effects of line on the left. These effects are so much more striking than anything on the right that the result is one of utter disbalance. Botticelli attempts a compositional unification by the usual device of a mass (the man's body) in the center, plus the line of

<sup>1</sup> Sistine Chapel.

## BOTTICELLI

the hedge which extends from the foreground in an oblique direction to the very end of the background, but the disproportion between the two halves is so great, and it is visible in the use of so many of the plastic elements, that the conflict is only to be solved by an effort which destroys aesthetic enjoyment.

It is not even possible to regard the two parts as pictures complete in themselves. For example, though the left side is almost complete as a unit, the accentuation of line in the foreground (successful enough as an isolated factor) is not successfully duplicated or given an equivalent by any corresponding feature back of the stooping man in a yellow robe, so that unity of design is incomplete even here. The right side is uninteresting throughout, partly on account of its drab color; on the left side the color, in spite of its brightness, is flashy, tawdry, and only superficially laid on. There is no unity of color.

One possible explanation for the utter lack of unity in a work by a man of Botticelli's general ability in composition, is that he tried to make the picture as a whole function as a design made up of light and shadow, with the right side operating as shadow and the left as light. But the plastic deficiencies are so great that the picture cannot be unified even by this means.

**Spring (U).** The design is pleasing, but in rather an obvious way. No effort is required to unify the picture as regards asymmetrical units: there is a greater number of figures on the left side than on the right, but the smaller number on the right are sufficiently emphasized to make the balance clearly even, the accentuatedly fluid, harmonious lines all tending in the same direction are obviously graceful; this rhythm is partly right-and-left, but is also reinforced by corresponding rhythmic lines in the trees behind the figures, the trees being sufficiently few in number to make them function as individuals and not as a mass. The result is a facile effect, but even as a linear and compositional device it is banal and threadbare.

The division of planes and spaces is good, without overaccentuation in either, and so is the pattern of light; the color, however, is drab, laid-on, and superficially felt. At the same time, it is sufficiently varied to give a certain amount of color-harmony: it is not below the level of the rest of the picture. The contrast of the light figures and the dark background of landscape gives a screen-effect resembling Fra Filippo Lippi's, but much less successfully; these figures have also the feeling of stone, like Mantegna's, but are dead compared to his. The general effect is that of a decoration, feebly felt plastically, and with an overcrowded design. It may be described as *a priori* beauty (in Bosanquet's sense); what gives it a specious character is the resort to illustrative elements (nudes, fruit, trees, the angel, the spirit of out-of-doors), which bring its appeal largely into the realm of sentimentality and day-dreaming.

**The Birth of Venus (U).** In this picture also the obvious appeal is one of line, but of line overaccentuated to the point of noisiness. This fact, coupled with the general thinness, hardness, and coldness (the effect is one of porce-



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

lain, or of an eggshell) shows Botticelli's aesthetic poverty. The composition is ostensibly a simple one, that is, a central figure with counterbalancing masses on either side; yet these masses are so overdone in terms of linear decorative rhythms that they are too strident to be in keeping with a simple design. The use of the line itself is as always highly skilled, but it functions as a distraction and not as an integral part in design.

### VERROCCHIO

**Baptism of Christ, with Two Angels (U).** This picture is of interest as showing one of the sources of Leonardo and Raphael. It is less a work of individual genius than a utilization of extraordinary talent; it is essentially academic, and the fact is interesting that Leonardo and Raphael should have found themselves drawn under the influence of an academician.

The composition is conventional, but the figures are drawn in rhythmic lines intelligently varied to form a design. The spacing is well done, and movement is well rendered in the man with the cross, on the right side of the painting. The color is laid on, but successfully so. The central figure is expressively drawn, with incisive line, and here as in the man on the right the muscular accentuations, felt rather more strongly than in Signorelli, are nicely blended with the line to represent movement. The picture is successful plastically for these reasons, and also because of the successful use of the landscape as background for the chief action: the two elements blend into an organic whole; the total effect, nevertheless, is redolent with academicism.

The debt of both Leonardo and Raphael is obvious. Raphael's line is there in germ, though Raphael made it more fluid, incisive and unbroken in continuity; he also discarded most of the muscular accentuations and increased the effect of space-composition. In the two kneeling figures on the left we see the birth of Raphael's sweetness and sentimentality. We see also the birth of the facial expression which became Leonardo's obsession and the method of using light in modeling, with a tendency towards overaccentuation of light and shadow as compared with the successful merging of the two in Piero della Francesca.

Kinship with Michel Angelo appears in the use of muscular accentuations, but in Verrocchio this seems to be the successful employment of a trick, and not a genuine realization of power.

Although this picture is fairly successful, as has been said, it has a melodramatic character when compared with the highest standards: the dramatic situation is not controlled by the plastic means and consequently the picture has some of the quality of Delacroix. In feeling for landscape it is inferior to those of Giotto and Piero della Francesca.

### LEONARDO

**Bacchus (L).** In this Leonardo's use of light is to be seen at its best. As usual it is the basis of the design, but here it is not overdone: color and

## MICHEL ANGELO

movement secure balance. The form of the picture is truly plastic. Even here, however, more color would reinforce the design, especially in the shadows, which tend towards dullness. Yet the picture has movement, power, conviction, and represents Leonardo at his very best.

**Annunciation (U).** The actual painting is not good, but there is successful merging of light with the other plastic means. The light is well used to make a pattern in the background, and in the modeling of the two figures, in which there is no overaccentuation even in the faces. The light also reinforces the color, which is here more successful than is usually the case in Leonardo, with a tendency towards structural effect. However, it is less juicy than in the Louvre version of the same subject. As a whole, in spite of the good design and comparatively effective execution in plastic terms, the picture is too formal and academic to be really moving.

**Vierge aux Rochers (L).** The deep mystery of the picture is well realized, but the lighting is overdone, and the color is dull and muddy, especially in the shadows. The painting is of poor quality, and facial expression plays too great a part in the achievement of the effect, which is thus impure when compared with those of Titian or Giotto.

**Portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli (L).** Successfully realized, but with the aid of accentuations in Leonardo's characteristic manner. Compare with Bellini for successful realization without accentuations.

**Mona Lisa (L).** The figure is realized in fine three-dimensional quality, in relation to a background with perspective not overaccentuated and yet convincing, therefore harmonizing well with the figure. One feels less the tendency of Leonardo to overlighting, probably because of the pattern formed by the lighting of the hands, which is not overdone, the upper part of the chest, and the face, against a sky with less light than the face and chest. Shadows not muddy as often in Leonardo. The landscape just back of the figure and up to the water-line is formed of a rich color, deep and charged with a brownish-red, which determines its general color-value. This color is duplicated in the sleeves, and the folds and curves of the sleeves form a harmonious design with the curves in the background just noted. Yet throughout there is a preoccupation with light which detracts from the value, and the same is true of the sentimental expression of the face.

## MICHEL ANGELO

**Expulsion from Eden.**<sup>1</sup> Reality is achieved by three-dimensional qualities in every mass and element in the picture. There is the characteristic Michel Angelo technique of modeling, light and shadow, but this obvious technique is unexceptionable because of the rhythm of both the light and the dark through which the modeling is done. The effect is extremely simple, but it is absolutely convincing by reason of the design of rhythmic elements in the trees, figures, masses, etc., into which light, shadow, and drawing all

<sup>1</sup> Sistine Chapel.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

enter, reinforced by the pervasive color. Sculptural quality is obvious, but is felt pictorially. The effect of movement is vigorous, powerful, real, and gives perfect embodiment to the human drama depicted.

### RAPHAEL

**Holy Family of Francis I (L.).** Good effect of design, but overemphasis of light and contour at the expense of the other plastic elements. The color is thin, dry, and does not serve any structural or organic purpose: it does not build up the masses or aid in unifying the composition. Hence the plastic quality of the picture is relatively thin and unreal.

**St. Michael Crushing Satan (L.).** The color is not very profoundly laid on: it is more than merely superficial, but the integration is not really convincing. The light is very well done: though accentuated in the upper part of the figure, there is sufficient brilliance on the shoulders of the demon to secure balance. The blacks are not so rich as in Titian. Portrayal of movement is extremely vivid, but it tends to be flamboyant and to be worked out in too great detail, instead of tersely, as in the greatest draughtsmen. The composition, though very good, suffers from a certain amount of monotony. Its pyramidal character, and the striking light and movement, were easily imitated, and became the prototype of many merely academic pictures.

**La Belle Jardinière (L.).** Pleasant but very conventional design and composition. The treatment of landscape, because of the avoidance of extreme sharpness of line, is better than most of Raphael's; yet the figure so overwhelmingly dominates the landscape that the latter seems subsidiary to such an extent as to have scarcely any function in the picture. The use of light is effective, and yet there is not, for all the photographic literalness of the picture, an impression of reality. The woman's sleeve looks like a balloon, and there is no suggestion of an arm within it. The color, when abstracted, is unsuccessful by reason of its drab, gray quality, which is not relieved by the brilliant red of the dress; it is merely laid on. The modeling, successful as it is, is done solely by light and shadow, and the failure of color to function in it, or to play any part in the organization of the three figures, gives a sense of unreality. The doughy, pasty, plastery effect of the Madonna, combined with the sentimentality of her expression, gives the impression of an effigy rather than of a being almost divine.

This picture represents the perfection of academic design, with all the elements but color well done, but without any real flash of inspiration: technical skill is too obvious. The design made out of light, of excellent space-composition, of expressive, rhythmic line, in short, practically every detail of the picture is done with consummate skill, but all fall short of the very best in painting: there is throughout an effect of superficiality.

**The Transfiguration (V.).** The obvious first effect is that of a well-built design in which light is the most conspicuous element, together with

## R A P H A E L

movement rendered by striking gestures, so coördinated that the general tendency of these movements is upwards. Masses, light, and movement are all merged into the traditional Raphael classic design.

Upon detailed analysis, this design falls apart. The color is totally unconvincing, of a generally drab tone, so unsuccessfully used that the light and color are sharply contrasted in the relative degree of their merit and there is no merging of the two as there is in Titian. Many incongruous elements militate against plastic unity, for instance, his preoccupation with Greek *motifs* in the rendering of the woman kneeling in the foreground. This is a classic Greek figure, taken bodily from the ancients, and it gives a dominant note to the foreground as a classic sculptural figure rather than as a successful use of the Greek tradition transferred to painting. It is sculpturesque even in the muscular accentuation. In Michel Angelo, the rendering of the sculpturesque is such that it merges with the rest of the picture and is the principal means of conferring strength upon it; in Raphael, in this figure, it so dominates the foreground and arrests the attention as to produce a jarring contrast with the other figures, all of which, with the exception of the boy near by, are less powerfully realized. Another example of the same throwing together of incongruous elements is to be found in the two bearded men in blue about halfway up on the left side of the picture, the lighting and tactile values of which are lifted bodily from Leonardo.

The feeling revealed in the rendering of the different objects in the picture is very unequal. The kneeling young man in yellow garb under the tree in the upper left-hand part of the picture is a superb bit of painting in the successful use of line, color, drawing, and expression. This is capable of sustaining the attention when analyzed into its component plastic means. It accentuates by contrast, however, the drab quality of most of the rest of the elements. Numerous groups, when abstracted and analyzed, give fairly satisfactory results in themselves as units. For instance, the group of men with the boy and woman give a well-realized pictorial effect—expressive movement, nice graduation of color from the light blue of the foreground to the deep red of the man in the background. There is fine space-composition, a powerful upward lift harmonizing well with the general movement. All these give balance to that part of the picture when considered as a unit. But successful as are this unit and the above-mentioned young man, these elements fail to achieve in the picture a plastic unity because they stand alone.

The bad points are numerous. For example, the two flying figures at the top of the picture, good instances of Raphael's sharp line and graceful in themselves, do not give the impression of movement, in spite of being lightly rendered. The figure on the rock at the right is in itself beautifully done but imperfectly realized in its plastic elements, that is, the head functions as a light-shadow element in the pictorial design, and fails to attain the degree of reality which is achieved on the corresponding level on the left



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

side, in the figure in the yellow gown already mentioned. The spotty character of the picture is fairly well exemplified by abstracting these figures and comparing them with one another for the ultimate feeling they give us.

In the case of color there is the same inequality. The total effect is drab, for the reasons already noted, especially because of the metallic and superficial quality. This is not true of the gown of the figure at the extreme right, with his hand raised, in which the color has a quality of brightness and an organic function. As against this, the gown on the figure at the extreme left of the picture, with raised hand, is also red, but it is absolutely dry, superficial, and without structural function.

In general, as a design, the picture unifies plastically because of the successful use of light, which functions as a subsidiary design, reinforced by the movements already analyzed, so that the light in itself arrests the attention in spite of the sharp break caused by the rock in the middle, and the obviously different character of the subject-matter in the upper and lower halves. The light functions as a pyramid which starts at the bottom of the picture, and in the foreground extends upward with various accentuations in intensity, to the brilliant light at the apex in which Jesus is bathed. The pattern of this light is reinforced by corresponding upward movement.

The picture is overdramatic, not, as one preoccupied with literary concerns would suppose, by reason of the subject and the dramatic attitudes of almost all the figures, but because these dramatic values are superficially rendered in plastic terms: it is overexpressive. Compare the total effect with that of a picture by Michel Angelo or El Greco, equally dramatic in subject-matter, but in which the plastic elements are successfully blended and made to be the means of carrying with conviction the human elements which the painter intends to portray. Nor does the picture fail in unity because of the abrupt division between the two halves, as an academician would say: the unity suffers because of the discordant passages above noted.

In the final analysis, the picture is rather tawdry in spite of its good features. The Greek figure in the foreground, especially, stands out like a sore thumb.

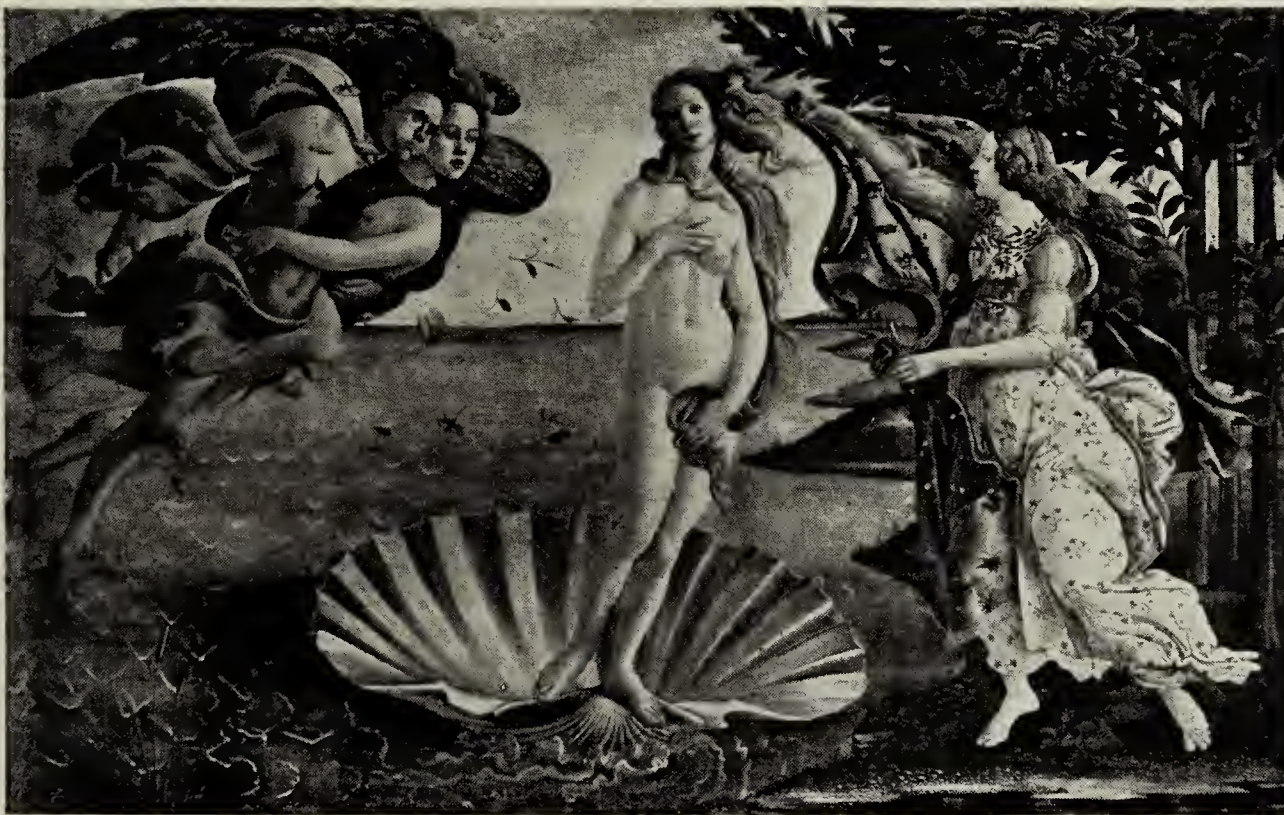
**Entombment (B).** Design pleasing, but analysis reveals that it is superficial, tawdry, overdramatic, in spite of bright color, and charming landscape. There is a lack of conviction through the excess of drama. The face of the old man with the beard is solid, dignified, and completely realized, by virtue of the proper use of plastic means, the freedom from overlighting, the angle at which the head joins the body, the design of face and hair. In contrast, the two heads composing the arc at the left are superficially done, the head at the middle is unconvincing, and in the one to the left of the arc there is descent into utter virtuosity. Like many of Raphael's pictures, this contains many passages of beautiful painting, and superb space-composition. In contrast, there is also bad color, cheap sentiment, and obvious display of skill. As a result, while effective as a composition and while containing a superb landscape, the picture is not good as a complete plastic form.





Francesco di Giorgio

Louvre



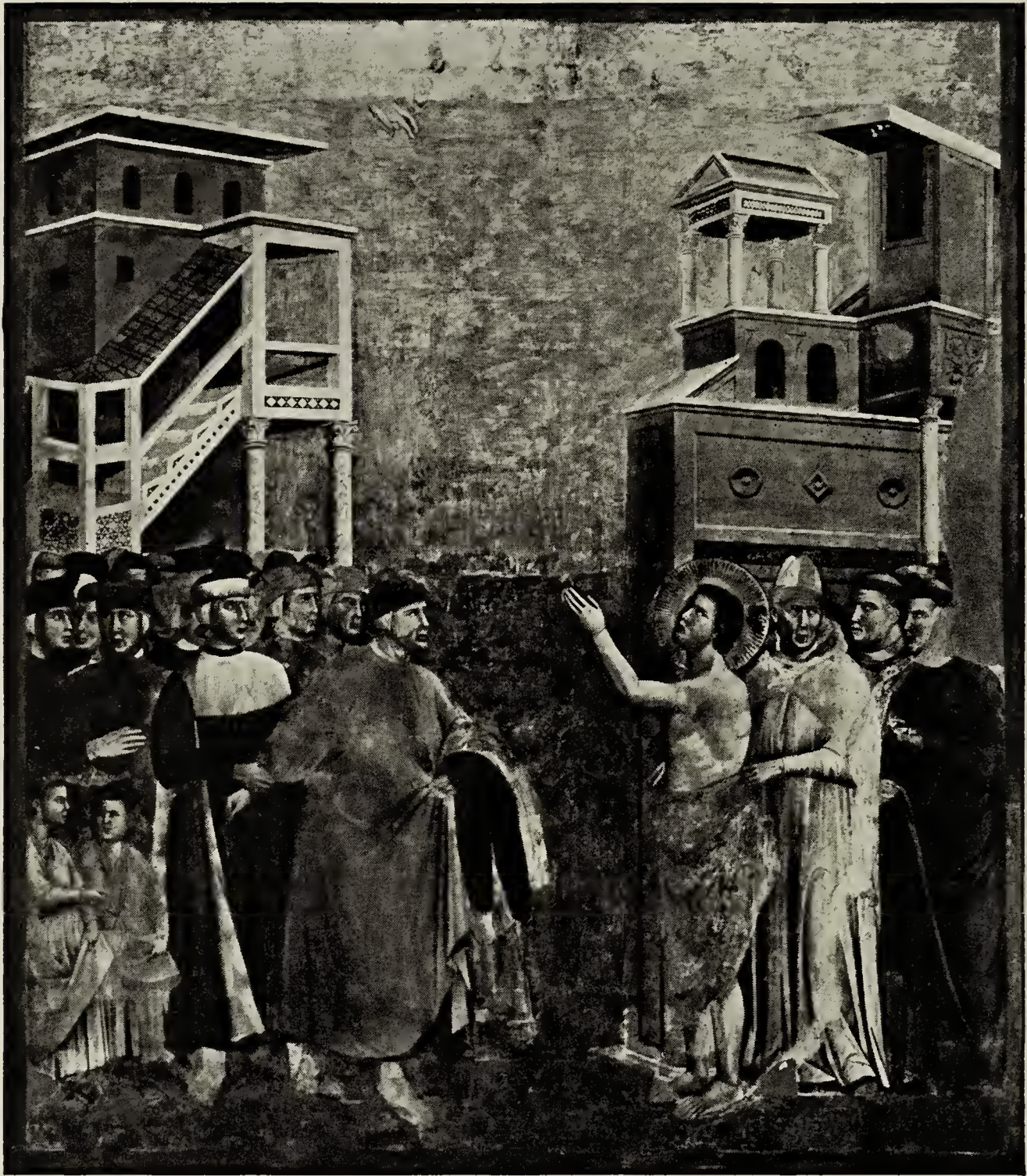
Botticelli

Analysis, page 395.

Uffizi

In the Francesco di Giorgio the formal and decorative values are unified while in the Botticelli the decorative quality predominates.





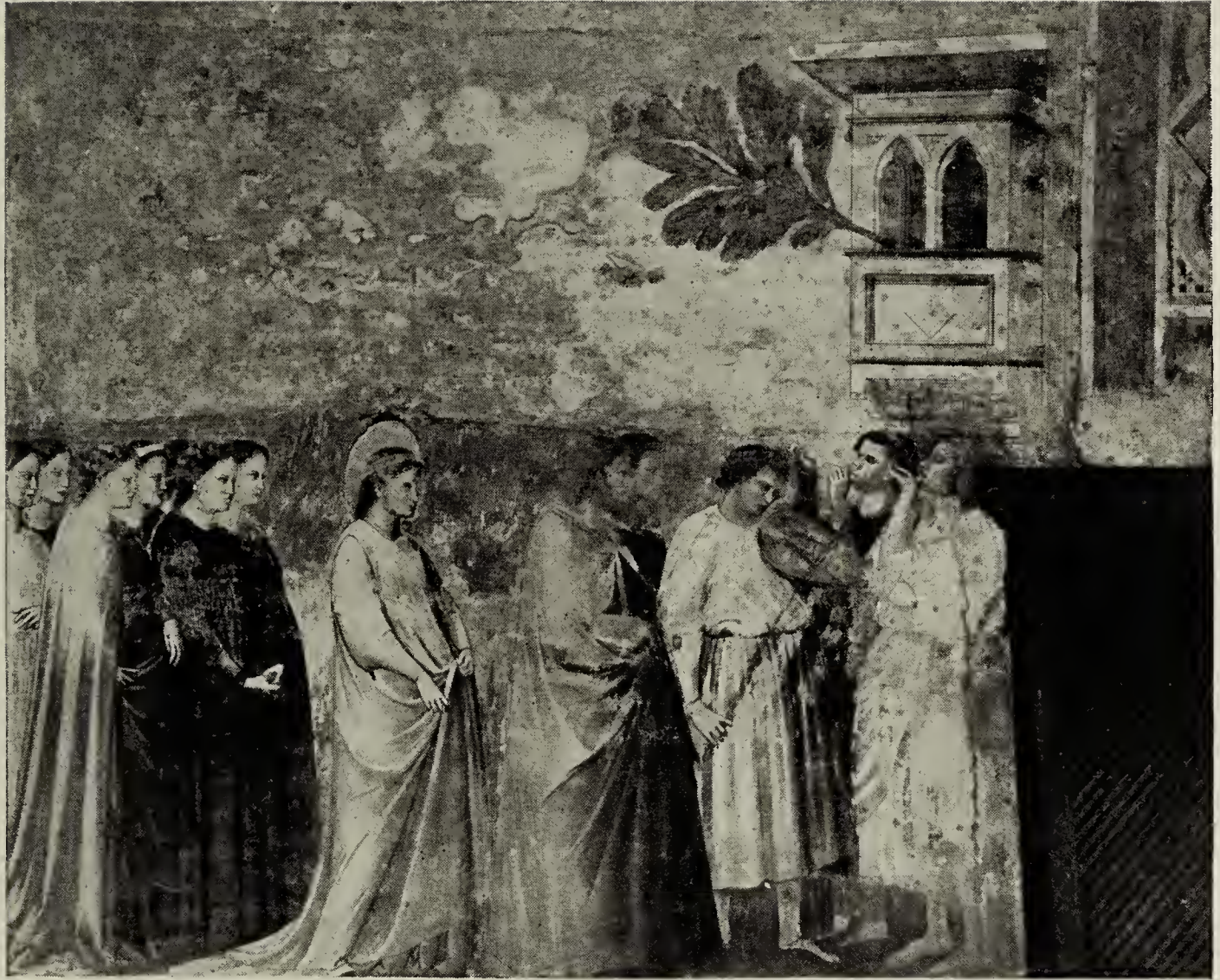
Giotto

Assisi

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[402]





Giotto

Padua

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Velasquez

Wallace Collection

Analysis, page 440



## RAPHAEL

Here as usual the classic influence determines the treatment of a subject to which it is inappropriate. The man at the right holding a cloth under Christ's knees, and the woman kneeling at the extreme right, are merely transformed Greek figures.

**Madonna del Baldacchino (P.).** Among Raphael's religious pictures, this is the most successful discussed here. The composition is formal, with complete bilateral symmetry. The figures in general are realized with more strength than in the vast majority of Raphael's pictures. Here as usual expressiveness tends towards sentimentality, but it is not so overloaded as sometimes. There is a waxy character in the faces and limbs of the individuals, giving them the ghostliness which is characteristic of Raphael; here, however, there is also a tendency towards reddish-brown which suggests an imitation by Raphael of the Bellini-Titian manner. This does lend an additional strength and solidity; it is, however, essentially specious, successful only superficially.

**Portrait of Maddalena Doni (P.).** This is well organized in the details of the figure and the relation of the figure to the background. It is an obvious imitation of Mona Lisa, but succeeds only in getting a superficial version of that picture, with increased sentimentality. The light is well distributed, but less well than in the prototype, the design in the landscape is less interesting, and there is a drab, muddy quality about the blues in the sleeves of the gown. There is an awkward tendency towards simplification, and in general the control of the various means is less complete than in Leonardo's picture.

**La Donna Velata (P.).** This is the best of the Raphaels analyzed. It is fairly successful as an organic whole of comparatively difficult achievement, because the background is gray, the scarf of the same color, and the dress more gray than white. The painting owes much of its plastic quality to the successful use of decoration in the right sleeve, which consists of a succession of folds, its edges bound with a golden-brown braid. This sleeve, together with the hand, which is also golden-brown, makes an interesting design in lines, tones, and masses. This seems to be the most successful use of the means at Raphael's disposal in getting a plastic unit. Even here, with all the strength, there is a tendency toward softness.

**Madonna with the Blue Diadem (L.).** In color this is better than most of Raphael's pictures, though the background is rather murky. The placing of the figure is good, the wall in the middle distance is very well painted, and the total composition is highly effective.

**Ansidei Madonna (N.G.).** In this there is the usual sugariness in the Madonna and Child, and the same excess of expression in the other figures. The perspective and space composition is everywhere good, but as usual the picture suffers from eclecticism. The composition balances in a formal academic way, but without any of the enrichment of the formal design by many and original plastic elements, as in the Giorgione Madonna at Castelfranco: what effect it has is due to facial expression and not to its properly pictorial quality.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

### ALBERTINELLI

**Christ Appearing to Magdalen (L.).** In this picture all the elements of the Florentine tradition are to be found—landscape, perspective, color, figure-painting, composition, etc. The landscape appears at first to be dissociated from the figures, but closer inspection reveals that the unification is successful. It has a silvery blue in the background that renders the infinity of distance and gives a peculiar mystic feeling which enhances the religious human story. The figures are clearly intent, doing something, that is, they are expressive in the best sense.

The color is very good, the effect arising largely from the contrast of the deep colors in the foreground with the silvers and blues of the background. This contrast is not sudden, but is developed by a gradation of tones in the middle distance. While these colors are not felt structurally, there is a fairly successful merging of the color with the form, and the general rich blending of the colors into a color-atmosphere suggests the Venetians. Light, like color, is used subtly to harmonize with the subdued tone of the picture, and to contribute to the characteristic quality of the painting, which is that of delicacy. There are faults, such as the painting of stuffs, but these are comparatively trivial, and as a whole the picture is one of the finest flowerings of the Italian genius.

### POLLAIUOLO

**Hercules Overcoming the Hydra; Hercules Crushing Antæus (U.).** The picture on the right shows the grotesque note to which Piero di Cosimo, Goya and Daumier owe much. It is not so successfully rendered in terms of solidity as Daumier's, and it falls short of Goya in simplicity and in subtle psychological penetratingness.

In the picture on the left the curved lines, forming an intricate, noteworthy pattern suggest Raphael's similar use of the same means. The line is not so incisive as Raphael's, but more varied in its quality of expressing strength by the obvious muscular accentuations which are to be found also in Signorelli and Michel Angelo, and in other painters down to Rouault. This is perhaps the original source of this device.

In short, the obvious interest of these pictures is the ability to render drama in plastic terms, so that the subject-matter and pictorial technique are perfectly coördinated.

### COSIMO TURA

**St. Dominic (U.).** This is a striking illustration of the ability to achieve reality by the creation of plastic form with the greatest economy of means. It consists of a brown face and a black cloak against a background originally gold but now faded to a mottled brown. The figure has a great effect of solidity, realized by contrast of light and shadow and with muscular accentuation paramount. The picture owes its design to the contrast between the

## GHIRLANDAIO

black-coated figure and the background. The pattern in the background is accentuated by another pattern made up of similar use of color and light and detail in the center of the body (hands, cuffs, etc.); a final reinforcing element in the general design is the duplication of this last element in the face, by use of the same means. In spite of the similarity of the general tones of the background and face, the face stands out in bold relief.

Throughout the picture, the feeling of El Greco is very much in evidence. The solidity of the face, accomplished through the use of tone, suggests Rembrandt and Daumier, though it is a more skeletal solidity. The solidity of the background suggests a rock as modeled by Cézanne, though Cézanne's is the more real; it is also suggestive of similar effects in Lorenzo Lotto, but is more solid.

This picture shows the unimportance of subject-matter: the doleful, over-pious expression, strongly accentuated by the plastic means above noted, is satisfactory to any one, however far from pious or doleful, who is able to feel the presence of plastic form.

**Pietà (L.).** The design in this is based upon muscular accentuations, like those of Signorelli and Michel Angelo. The dead Christ is so powerfully represented that it serves as a central mass, which is convincing in itself, and around which the accentuations in the faces and hands of the other figures organize themselves into a rhythmic unit of powerful effect. The use of means is more convincing than in Signorelli, and the design as a whole is equal to those of Michel Angelo in strength, though the color is not so good. Compared with Michel Angelo's, it is an interesting illustration of the use by different men of the same means to get different effects. This is one of the very great achievements in the history of painting.

## PERUGINO

**Combat of Love and Chastity (L.).** The colors are not deeply felt nor much used organically, but are delicate, with a tendency towards the Fra Angelico color-form, and this use of rather feeble, light, comparatively laid-on color blends well with the lacy trees, the general lightness of the picture, and gives a sense of delicacy, reinforced by the rhythm and the very successful space-composition. The picture is essentially fairylike in its delicacy, and superior to his religious compositions, which are formulated, academic, soft and sentimental.

## GHIRLANDAIO

**Frescoes in Santa Maria Novella Church, Florence.** The color is bad. There is a reliance on technical tricks, as in the painting of the folds in the gowns and other decorative materials, and on a pageant-like subject-matter. The aesthetic offense is not only plastic but also moral: it offends our intelligence that such an important work should have been attempted by so limited a use of technical means.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

### SIGNORELLI

**Adoration of the Magi (L.).** There is a very successful use of movement, which tends from the bottom of the picture towards the top, extending up to the limit of the canvas. It is obtained by muscular accentuations and by light, and is carried above the figures by the columns. Here as always, Signorelli falls short of the conviction of muscular power by his inability to use light and shadow in a harmonious way with those muscular accentuations, so that there is not a good design formed.

**Moses as a Law-Giver.<sup>1</sup>** The design is overpowering, consisting primarily of varied, animated movement, with the dignity secured by avoidance of overemphatic means. The movement is a succession of small rhythms in the main group in the foreground. A suggested feeling of anatomical accentuation in the bodies adds to and participates in this movement, and gives to the bodies a solidity which is a suggestion rather than an actual reality. The picture is obviously a step in the direction of the three-dimensional, and so an anticipation of Michel Angelo. The movement is wavy, modulated, and constantly changed, with the general direction horizontal. It is designed and varied by a series of vertical rhythms, made up of lines in the figures, clothing, etc.; the interplay of these vertical planes with the wavy ones is the chief characteristic of the design. This movement in the foreground is continued in the rock in the center of the picture and is varied by a number of elements, figures, trees, etc.

A rather striking feature of the picture is the definite pattern formed by the light, nicely adjusted to the other elements, so that it is not overaccentuated, either in the actual illumination of the whole picture, or in the general pattern of light as above noted. This general effect is difficult to achieve because of numerous dark colors (greens, etc.) such as one finds, usually used badly, in Botticelli.

The group of figures in the left background is a picture in itself. It is a fine composition, completely organized, which could be taken out and framed; it would stand as a plastic unit for the same reason that the whole picture is a plastic unit. It would even have the added attraction of a better use of light, in every respect above noted, than that of the picture as a whole. The masterly use of this left background as a unit in composition contributing so largely as a pictorial element to the picture in general, is at once noticeable when it is seen in relation to the corresponding unit on the right side of the picture. Here a landscape devoid of figures functions also as a picture in itself, this time as an uncomplicated landscape in which light, trees, masses, and lines function as a rhythmic unit, less actively than the unit on the left side, but placidly and subtly. In the left group, the spacing and varied positions of each figure give the sense of rhythm, movement, all integrated with light in an extremely dignified, satisfying manner. The balance of these two background units is a fine example of satisfying variety.

<sup>1</sup> Sistine Chapel.

## COSIMO ROSSELLI

The color is comparatively lacking in brightness and structural function. (The yellow gown with folds at the right is an exception to this.) A number of elements only indicated, like the man's legs at extreme right, which are absolutely flat, give a sense of incompleteness in certain details of the picture. Nevertheless, the picture does function colorfully because all colors are rhythmically used, blended in a masterful way with light, and varied with a succession of rhythms constituting the lines of the figures. That is, rhythmic use of color organizes the composition.

This picture challenges comparison with a Botticelli because of the obvious rhythmic quality of the lines, which in this case, however, are not used ostentatiously at the expense of design, color, etc., and because of the successful use of those dark colors which Botticelli used inharmoniously. We get a sense of color-harmony here in spite of the absence of any brilliant, immediately arresting colors or color-overtones as in the Venetians, because of the successful merging of what color there is with the rest of the plastic elements in the design, in such a way that the general color-harmony is felt to be a properly proportioned plastic element in the ensemble.

In point of proper adjustment of plastic elements in a plastic unity, this picture ranks very high. In spite of many and diverse objects, it is not overcrowded. The painter's mastery consists in merging these many elements and episodes into an organic, plastic whole. The picture is less appealing than it would be if the color were effective everywhere; however, the deadening of particular areas is forgotten in the general effect of the picture. The deadening is probably a less serious defect because of the tendency of these various elements to form in themselves a pattern.

## COSIMO ROSSELLI

**Pharaoh's Destruction in the Red Sea.**<sup>1</sup> Here again there is a complete picture on each side of the center, the two really hanging together. It illustrates Rosselli's characteristic use of plastic means to give a moving, powerful drama in which the control of the means avoids the cheapness of Delacroix. The feeling for landscape in the background is akin to that of the Chinese, and in a measure to that of Giotto, and is done so effectively that the moving force of the background operates in the design to keep together the picture which would otherwise tend to fall apart.

This unifying function of the background is accomplished by the tree of obviously Chinese character just back of the figures in the foreground and to the left of the center. From that tree the eye is carried irresistibly to the powerful background of clouds: this background, in its quietly unobtrusive Chinese way, functions quite as strongly, as an element of design as do the lines and masses which, in the right foreground, depict the dramatic but restrained story of the drowning, and with which the group in the left foreground is directly connected.

<sup>1</sup> Sistine Chapel.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

### MANTEGNA

**Parnassus (L.), Calvary (L.).** Mantegna is essentially an illustrator. His stories are told in terms of the Roman antique, and the illustration is not properly welded into art.

In these pictures the illustration is conveyed with marvelous ability by means of sharp line. The composition is good, with architectural features and figures playing an important part, but the figures are felt as though they were made of stone. The landscape is a mere incident. Line is used not only illustratively but with fine rhythmic effect. The color has slight structural function, and there is deficient sense of color-harmony. (This is not due to the dark green, which is used by many painters, from Giorgione to Courbet, in combination with other and brighter colors, with no offense to the sense of harmony.) The color, in other words, when abstracted, seems unsatisfactory, and it is necessary to look to the other elements, patterns, composition, and linear rhythm, to find satisfaction. This destroys the effect of unity. This applies especially to "Calvary" and in lesser measure to "Parnassus"; in the latter, the color when abstracted does yield some satisfaction, but this is feeble because of its lack of quality and its superficial, non-organic character.

**The Agony in the Garden (N.G.).** In this picture, Mantegna shows that he is capable of using color; instead of throwing the composition out of gear, as in the Louvre pictures, it is here employed to reinforce the composition, both as a whole and in its elements. The integral part that color plays in the design makes this a better picture than the preceding examples of Mantegna's work.

### VIVARINI

**Madonna Enthroned with Saints (A.V.).** Clear-cut, sharp line is used chiefly as a means of literal expression of sentiment, but it is combined also in linear rhythms, which tend to alternate duplications around a centrally composed group and give the effect rather of monotony, unrelieved by color. The color is without individual distinction, either in the quality of the individual colors or their effect in combination. The light is well organized to form a pattern but there is no reinforcement by color. The expression of groveling pietism is of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Italians. What distinction he has he owes to the academic traditions common to all the Fifteenth Century Sieneese and Florentines. He is essentially an academician, a master of expressive line, with no feeling for color, and little general imagination.

### GIOVANNI BELLINI

**Sacred Conversation (P.).** Design very striking, and sustains analysis. The chief element in it is the relation of the light to the dark masses, and the general lighting is superb. There is perfect unity between the figures and

## GIOVANNI BELLINI

the background, with the landscape deeply felt, though it is still primarily an incident in the telling of the human story.

The picture is clearly a transition from the classic painters represented by Mantegna to the full flower of the Venetians, and its characteristics may be treated in detail by showing what they came from and what they anticipated.

The figures and character of color recall Mantegna. The figures show, however, a departure from the antique line, by which a naïve modification of naturalism makes them more interesting (see the two figures to the right of the picture). Mantegna's color is often dark, and is displeasing because of its lack of harmony with neighboring colors, also often dead, stone-like and superficial, and with little part to play in the design. Bellini's color clearly shows the origin of the Venetian glow, and the dark greens and browns are used in connection with other colors, making a total harmony which functions in the design and gives the picture its dominant and individual character. The Venetian atmosphere is clearly apparent, but is largely confined to certain areas: it is diminished and not all-pervasive. The rocks in the picture are solid: they are real rocks, made up of light and color. The man in the gown leaning on the balcony a little to the left of the center shows the the inspiration of Tintoretto. The origin of the Venetian tradition is clearly evident also in the architectural details in the back, in rocks that rise like mountains, and in the glow; in the group of figures in the foreground, we see a possible anticipation of Carpaccio's later pageant-like outdoor life of ordinary people. The source of Bellini's inspiration was the Italian painters of the Fourteenth Century, as shown by the three women who form a triangular group on the left. There is a suggestion of Masaccio in the tendency to render perspective faithfully, but there is not the realistic blurring of the outlines of objects as they recede in distance.

**Madonna of the Alberetti (A.V.).** This is obviously the source of much of Raphael's work with Madonnas. Here there is a slight tendency towards sweetness but not sentimentality: the sweetness does not as in Raphael compromise dignity and reality. The background is brilliantly lighted on either side of the yellowish-green screen, giving a decidedly novel note in the use of color and one far superior to Raphael's stereotyped use of light and landscape for his Madonnas. The color is a rich blue of unusual quality, and the red sleeve is varied with light in such a way that we can see the origin of Tintoretto. Leonardo's debt to Bellini is apparent both in drawing and in the use of light not only as forming a pattern but for purposes of modeling. In Bellini the accentuation of light as a means of modeling is less noticeable and the light is so distributed throughout the mass that the result is accomplished without drawing attention to the means—one of the sure signs of great artistry.

**Madonna in Vestry of I Frari, Venice.** In this picture again the Madonna and Child are realized with dignity and strength in plastic terms, and this plastic effect instead of being spoiled by sentimentality of expression is heightened by the facial expression, which is strong and not soft. The two



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angels below the Madonna are similarly free from the expression of sanctimoniousness and otherworldliness which is the stock formula for angels: they are two happy children of this world. In the dome over the Madonna the Venetian glow is forecast. Light, color, line, make up a strong design, which goes well with the figures of mother and child. The colors are not strong, but rather quiet, and very few of them are structurally used, though the tendency is there in the gown of the Madonna. This blue robe of the Madonna, and the sleeve and underneath dress which is perceptible only at the neck, at the middle of the figure, and at the very bottom, form a strong subsidiary design which serves as a sort of background to set off the light. In the panel to the left, the heads of the two saints show a structural use of color and anticipate Tintoretto. On the right, the faces and hands of the two saints are already quite Titian-like, and have a fairly well-developed Venetian glow. In the robes of the saints, however, the color is rather like that of Vivarini, both in its laid-on character, and in its use in connection with the folds of the gowns. The picture as a whole is charming in its dignity, reality, and great simplicity: it is realized plastically, and that makes the subject-matter realistic and moving aesthetically.

### CARPACCIO

**Dream of St. Ursula (A.V.).** The effect is one of deeply felt, all-pervasive, charming gentleness and peace. It owes its value to the realization of these qualities in a well-organized design, repeated in subsidiary designs, all in good plastic terms. The center of interest is the sleeping figure, well brought out by the use of light: this use, concentrated, specialized, and focalized, is not to be confused with objectionable accentuation of light: it is a means of realizing the spirit of the scene and composing the design. The picture is rich in color-harmonies, accentuated by broad surfaces of color rather than by many colors, and this harmony is brought about by both quality of color and its juxtaposition with broad surfaces of shadow. The Venetian glow is foreseen here, but the effect is more silvery, lighter, clear-cut, without the general reddish overtones which enter into the full-fledged glow.

The composition is balanced, but not in the academic fashion of arrangement of masses about a central mass. The arrangement is orderly and there is a total balance, but it is rather a progression from one object to another, heightened by line, light, and color. The fluid rhythms extend well into the third dimension, and the effect of space composition is admirable, comparing well with that of Perugino: there is an airiness, a roominess about the picture, in which the arrangement of the masses is highly effective.

All these effects are augmented by the wonderful, realized feeling of textures, especially in the bed-covers. The charm of these textures is akin to that of Vermeer, but is less worked out in minute detail, and so more free from the suggestion of a preoccupation, which is often noticeable in Vermeer. These textures also give an effect akin to that in Peter de Hooch, and this

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interior quality is heightened by the use of appropriate architectural features composed of lines of varying length, never long enough to produce monotony, but always meeting other lines either at right angles or with curves, in such a way as to produce the impression of a balance of lines. This feeling for place, combined with a velvety softness in the surfaces of the objects, contributes powerfully to the spirit of the picture, which is also increased by the subsidiary designs, such as the pattern made by the head of the figure, the hand, and the pillow. All these things so completely give the essence of the situation that the actual story, with its interest of sentiment, is superfluous as an aesthetic element.

The textural effects in this picture suggest the Dutch and Flemish, but the use of them is unmistakably Italian. There is a lightness of line and color, a delicacy, and an ability to utilize space, that the Flemish rarely possessed.

Carpaccio is a striking proof of the absurdity of all statements that realistic treatment of textiles, stuffs, etc., constitutes a false note in painting. It may of course become such, but when utilized as here, with due subordination to general design and the plastic quality of the scene depicted, it adds strongly to the aesthetic and properly pictorial effect.

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**Madonna with St. George and St. Francis.**<sup>1</sup> The design of this picture is easily grasped because of its almost exact bilateral symmetry. The Madonna and saints are set against a background of airy lightness, so convincing that if regarded in isolation it suggests that the primary purpose of the artist was to paint a landscape. It is, however, seen to be first and foremost a setting for the group as soon as we look at the group itself. The three figures make a pleasing pyramid, which is increased in interest by the medallion in the tapestry over the throne, the texture of which is painted in great detail.

Aside from the consummate skill of the use of all the elements of painting, this picture owes its power to the multitude of designs which are subordinated to the general design, and which give it a variety and subtlety which are likely to escape the observer's attention on the first glance. Each side of the landscape is itself a design in point of line, color and light, setting off the trees, tower, mountain; each has the feeling of the idyllic charm and also the majesty of landscape in general, though this effect is varied in the two sides. The left side has a rather yellow, sunny glamour, while the right side is silvery and lighter, though the golden effect extends far enough into it to give to both sides this golden atmosphere. Though as yet lighter than it became in Giorgione's later pictures, especially in his "Concert Champêtre," it is already his individual and unmistakable note, which is so largely responsible for his lyric, Arcadian charm. Bellini's influence is clearly apparent in this landscape, though the light is more generally diffused, has no especial tendency to form intricate light-patterns, and has a more silvery effect than Bellini's glow.

<sup>1</sup>Castelfranco.



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The Madonna is graceful in posture, line and expression, and the colors red and green are particularly interesting in the design made up of the folds of the gown. The infant is equally light and graceful, and its lines form an interesting pattern when taken by themselves. This pattern is a component of the larger design formed by the Madonna, and the still larger design made up of the throne and each of the upper and successive parts, arranged in deepened planes towards the background—all this reinforced by the pattern of the medallion, the throne-cloth with the pattern-note of the design repeated in general tendency. There is still an additional pattern in the textile back of the throne, and the textile upon which the altar-cloth rests. The rich stripes of red, yellow, and green appearing to right and to left of the altar-cloth, exhibit general symmetry accompanied by effective variation in detail. All these give a monumental character to the throne: the abstract monumental character is realized in plastic terms as is the processional quality in the Padua Giotto already discussed. This is set off by the two figures in the foreground, which in themselves are monumental, with the same ease, grace, and dignity of posture to be seen in the Madonna, with whom they make up the obvious pyramidal composition of the picture. The monk's figure forms in itself a very simple design made up of folds in the cowl, position of hands, etc., which gives a picturesque and varied element of balance in the total composition. All this is strongly contributed to by the checkerboard pattern in the floor, of alternate white and grayish-blue squares. This functions as an element in a pattern of light and shade, giving variety to the whole picture: the figures and the red wall as shade, and the light on the floor together with that on the Madonna and Child and the extension of light in the landscape, form a contrast which enters powerfully into the plastic form of the picture.

The influences revealed by the figures are clearly those of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, with the effect of Bellini apparent in the Madonna herself: there is a reminiscence of the Tintoretto-like figures of the two saints in the left of the Bellini altarpiece in I Frari. The knight with his armor is obviously inspired by both Bellini and Mantegna, but only in general style, and with such obvious additions in achievement of reality that a new form is constituted, with the classic influences present only in solution.

The color is rich, harmonious and well illuminated, and it ties the compositional units together into an organic whole. The Giorgionesque glow is clearly present, and its function as a balancing mass in design is to be seen on the left side of the landscape, where it balances the mountain, light blue in color and slightly mottled with light, on the right side. The light is used throughout with powerful functional effect, both as illumination and in design: in particular, it forms an inverted pyramid the base of which is in the sky and the apex in the medallion; the interior of this pyramid is enriched by color, mass, details of textures, etc., above noted. This pyramid functions in relation to the light flooded upon the floor; there is a further enrichment

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in the light on the plateau extending back from the red wall, so that this total design of the inverted pyramid is really a three-dimensional cone with the surface nearest us cut away so that we can look into an interior of rich colors, patterned lines, etc.

Perspective is very pronounced, but like light is well merged in the general design, so that it is not at all an overaccentuation. Possibly about the legs of the knight there is a suggestion of overemphasis; elsewhere all is done perfectly, with an effectiveness which may be judged if we look at the altar-cloth with the medallion, which seems to hang out from the bottom of the throne. The effect of the space-composition, together with that of the modeling in light and shadow, yields a convincing impression of reality to all parts of the picture.

The total effect of the picture is one of gentleness, delicacy, grace, peace, majesty, with landscape and figures perfectly in accord in the achievement of the effect, to which the story itself is only a detail. There is a synthesis of the traditions, plus a greater realization of solidity, grace, and reality to make up a new form. It is conventional in the sense of general design, but the variation and enrichment of this design, revealed by a detailed analysis, lead to forgetfulness of the conventionality. The picture suffers by comparison only with the "Concert Champêtre," in which light and color are even more perfectly blended, and achieve a reality even more convincing. This is an extremely fine distinction and must not be understood as detracting from the reality of the figures in the present painting.

**Concert Champêtre (L.).** This picture is surely one of the greatest single achievements in the history of painting.

The composition cannot be analyzed adequately from the standpoint of a central mass with balancing right and left masses as chief compositional intention, yet the arrangement of objects would lend itself to a composition of that kind. The painting is held together by the rhythmic use of line, light, color, mass, space, bathed in a charming, all-pervasive glow. The use of color structurally is perfect. The light seems natural rather than accentuated, yet it forms patterns similar to those which are the main theme of Bellini's "Sacred Conversation." On the right, the background functions as a balancing mass to the rock and tree at the left; it is a picture in itself; it is a group in relation to the central group, to the standing nude, to the group of trees, to the castle in the middle distance, and to the pattern formed by the long streak of light in the clouds. This little group of men and animals approaches a study in chiaroscuro and has much of the feeling of a Rembrandt.

Nothing in this picture is overdone. There is no preoccupation with light-design, such as might be charged against Bellini's "Sacred Conversation," nor is there anything academic in the color, composition, or any use made of any of the plastic means. It has infinite variety in all these respects yet the composite effect is simple. There seems to be no element that can be criticized plastically at the expense of any other element. Hence its



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charm, Arcadian quality, power, splendor, majesty, deep peace, and mystic effect, deep but satisfying, are justifiable because the painting has sufficient objective reference to which the mystical emotion can be rationally attached.

Every spot on which the eye rests gives satisfaction and carries the eye on to other spots equally restful and satisfying.

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**The Assumption.**<sup>1</sup> This picture illustrates a supremely successful solution of plastic problems on a very large scale. It is a composition with figures on three levels, with unequal numbers of figures in each group, all, however, perfectly unified and containing design within design, diversifying the effect and making the total unity proportionately more impressive. Since the basic problem is essentially the same as that of the Raphael "Transfiguration," and since the two pictures present a striking contrast in their use of plastic means, it will be useful to compare the two in the course of this analysis. The point of paramount interest is the relation of the subsidiary designs to the principal design.

The basic problem is that of making the transition from earth to heaven through the intermediation of a central mass. This is made up of many details, with a general upward tendency of the movement towards God and the angel at the top of the picture. In the Raphael the central mass is sharply divided from the lower level by a projection which, as we have seen, does not really make the picture disjointed. In the Titian there is no such projection, so that the lower and middle units are on the same plane: this makes it possible to grasp and appreciate with less difficulty the general design.

The masses on the different levels are all realized in characteristically Titian fashion, but with varying degrees of conviction. The technique is most typically Titian's in the central unit, made up of the Madonna and angels, but even in this there is not uniformity: the angels are the more organic in their coloring.

In the lower group, though the color is structurally used and is pervasive and successful in itself, it is here made subsidiary to the essentially dramatic design. This is very successfully accomplished in terms of line, mass, space, in fine orderly arrangement. The direction of the rhythmic movement so attained is varied. It starts on each side of the picture and culminates in the center with the pointing upward of the two arms. This central point fixes our attention very strongly by reason of the attractive design made by the head of the central figure of the group in relation to the two arms. These are placed in two different positions and are rather broadly drawn, somewhat in the manner of Masaccio, but with a departure from realism for the sake of better suggesting the upward trend of the picture. Broad drawing

<sup>1</sup> I Frari, Venice.

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is characteristic of nearly all the figures in this group: they are treated only here and there in terms of the typical Titian color, as for example in the mass near the extreme left of the picture, with bulging white sleeve, and the solid, colorfully structural, characteristic Titian head and gown of the figure on the extreme right. In these, three-dimensional color, though perceptible, is less successfully realized than is usual with Titian. The two figures gowned in red immediately adjoining the figures just noted function chiefly as color-surfaces. This was probably intentional, for two reasons: first, to provide the inner part of a frame for the center of the group (the other two figures serving as the outer part of the frame); second, to fill in the lower parts of a conventional pyramid-design, the apex of which is the Virgin at the top. The composite effect of this lower group grows more powerful the longer it is observed: it forms a strong, rhythmic, varied, dramatic group which is also simple and dignified.

The central group forms a fine composition in itself, made up of a series of semicircular planes, each occupied by angels, clouds, etc. These are so used in connection with perspective as to give the sense of space and depth. The effect of depth, however, is unobtrusive, and the whole central composition is made the point of chief interest by the solid, structural use of color in the three-dimensional forms in the various planes. The Virgin, who serves as the central mass in this composition, makes a design interesting in itself from the standpoint of variety achieved by line, color, light and shadows. This design gets additional force from being obviously a repetition, with modifications, of the design in the lower mass formed by the head and arms of the central figures, as above noted. Similarly, this design reinforces that in the lower level. The left side of the central mass is itself a modified pyramidal design, made unconventional in two ways: first, by having the apex of the pyramid obliquely to the left, instead of straight up and down; second, by being enriched by the various positions of the arms, legs, heads, garments, etc., in the group. The planes here function very actively in carrying the pyramid not only upward but decidedly backward, giving it the effect of a three-dimensional mass which serves as a sort of frame to accentuate the central compositional mass of the Virgin.

The right side of this middle group appears simplified in point of number of individual figures so that the first clearly perceptible effect is a sense of disturbance in its relation to the unit on the left. But this is another instance of the general type of picturesqueness noted earlier, by which symmetry is achieved by variety. Instead of finding an exact duplication, we find a composite form which resolves itself upon close inspection into a series of interesting colors and lines, lights and shadows, which resemble in general a three-dimensional rock, but which are dimmed angels, and which serve as the center of a subsidiary composition. This is an inverted pyramid, the apex of which is the two colorfully structural angels, the left base an angel less strongly done, the right base two heads in the more solid Titian style, but broadly treated. This contrast between the oblique pyramid on the



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left which achieves depth by the use of a modified perspective, and this inverted pyramid on the right which seems more simple as regards number of figures, etc., but is equally active as a three-dimensional mass, is a triumph of difficult compositional unity through variety, in what to a superficial view is a disjointed composition.

The upper compositional group of the angel and God owes its value to a design of line and only slightly indicated color, which tends towards the bizarre but is in reality a repetition of the pyramidal note in the other two levels. In this case, the apex of the pyramid is God's head and the base two angels, one of which is in itself an attractive design; once more, we get in this whole upper composition the effect of three-dimensional quality broadly indicated and achieved by the use of numerous planes, which gives the effect of a solid, deep compositional group.

The total design is formed by the relation of the three levels to one another, each supporting that above it, and with the middle level appropriately containing the largest number of plastic elements, and so most strongly soliciting the attention. The duplication and rhythm of minor designs in these different levels, already commented upon, is greatly reinforced by the deep, convincing background of sky and atmosphere against which they are set. Between the lower and middle level this sky is calmly assertive as a dividing line of contrasting colors, silver and blue, which functions both to give distinction to the lower level and to unite it to that above. Above, the sky extends from the back of the Virgin to the very top of the picture, and contains an enveloping atmosphere with many of the traits of the Venetian glow. It is, however, done more lightly, more in the manner of Bellini, and serves as a fitting apex and climax to the diffusion of the upper two groups, with a beautifully, nicely tempered, strongly dramatic light, the execution of which is entirely free from virtuosity. This light is framed in by a deepening towards the characteristic Titian red which, in semicircular shape, frames in the whole upper part of the picture, going from the very top to the upper part of the second compositional group on either side. This form, approaching the circle, adds to the rhythm of the group and is so proportioned and tempered with light and color that it gives the sense of infinity attained in the supreme degree only by painters of the rank of Titian and Rembrandt. This illuminated sky contrasts well with the blue silvery sky below, and these together form a pyramidal design of light which is in itself a supreme triumph of the use of plastic means.

This picture is infinitely superior to the Raphael "Transfiguration." Its effect of depth, perspective, solidity, is achieved at every point by perfectly restrained use of the means required, and its unity is perfect: the light, color, and rhythms which tie it together never stand out as tricks. The color, in spite of its compositional function, is not bright, and the glow is subdued; the light works subtly, not, as in Raphael, obviously and violently; and the same is true of the rhythm of line and mass over which the light plays. There is complete freedom from either softness or exaggeration of expression and

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all the parts of the canvas are done with mastery: there are no examples of good painting here and bad painting there such as were pointed out in the Raphael, or of different and incompatible traditions standing out in the separate areas of the picture. There is perfect unity and infinite variety, so incorporated with the values of the subject that the picture admits of any desired amount of symbolic interpretation without detriment to its plastic value. The value of the picture is shown by the degree to which it sustains analysis: at first it is not very striking, but as the rhythm and harmony of its parts are brought to light the satisfaction increases until it reaches the point of complete mystic absorption. If one is interested in the story that interest is intensified by the telling of it in plastic terms. But for the deep, human values embodied in intense even though abstract forms, the plastic qualities of the painting are all-sufficient, and make the narrative of no importance.

**Man with the Glove (L.).** The design is extremely simple and correspondingly difficult to do. The figure is almost of the same color and light-value as the background, nevertheless it stands out. The face functions as color but as a somber color: the effect is largely constructed out of light, but the color is strongly structural. The line is extremely simple: practically the only distinct lines are those of the features. The design is effected by the light, focused on face, hands, shirt-front and glove, all very simply done. All parts of the lighted design, including the slightly defined mass at the lower right-hand corner, play a fully satisfactory part in the picture, and even the very dark background unifies as a mass contrasting with the dark coat. The contrast between the dark masses is very subtle, but there is never lack of the necessary distinction to assure each an independent rôle. All elements are merged perfectly, and are scarcely perceptible as individual elements. This is a supreme instance of the art that conceals art.

**Supper at Emmaus (L.).** The color in this picture is rich but varied, and the action, characteristically and harmoniously organized, is rendered by highly expressive drawing. The modeling is adequate, and the Venetian glow is well realized. Each person is doing something, the actions being varied but effectively united in a single "plot." The spacing is very effective. The figures on the two sides of Christ at the center are not equal, but there is no sense of disbalance because from whatever point one selects the eye follows the graceful line of the figures, a line broken in continuity by their varying heights, and meeting other lines coming in various directions from every part of those figures. All these lines are fluid, graceful, smooth, harmonious. The varied line in the table, broken by the folds of the tablecloth, relieves an otherwise blank expanse. The color of this tablecloth is rich, and the folds in it form a rhythm repeated in the lines in Christ's coat. The line formed by the table as a whole parallels the upper line which begins in the man seated at the right side of the canvas, runs up to his neck, over his head, to Christ, and on through the group at the left. The use of perspective to achieve deep space under the table is admirably yet unobtrusively done.



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The whole rhythmic design of color, space, planes, without emphasis of facial expression or gesture to yield an adventitious effect, constitutes a form holding in solution the deepest human and mystical values. The impression is one of rhythm, harmony, grace, deep peace, profound satisfaction.

**Entombment (L.).** The design is very arresting at first glance. It is due to a series of graceful lines, curved from each side, which come to a perfect balance in the central meeting-point. This oval design, made up of the figures, is contributed to by the spacing, light, and colors, the latter being deep, rich, structurally used, and set off by light to form a subsidiary design which rhythmically duplicates the general design. There is extremely powerful enhancement of light by color. Again we have restraint in gestures and facial expressions, with deep human and religious feeling. It is similar to but more complex than Giotto's "Entombment."

**Christ Crowned with Thorns (L.).** This shows Titian's occasional fascination by Leonardo's accentuation of light. The light pattern is much stronger than usual, so that the feeling in the central bearded figure reminds one considerably of Leonardo, though the richer color, used with better structural effect, makes the figure more convincing than it would be in Leonardo. The action is also overaccentuated. The lances at various angles make an interesting design which tends to frame in the struggling group. The high lights in themselves also form an interesting pattern.

**Jupiter and Antiope (L.).** The cupid at the top serves to unify a picture which would otherwise have a tendency to be divided into two parts by the full-sized tree in the foreground. From the group at either side of the picture, the eye is carried to the well-lighted cupid at the top of the pyramid, and then down to the group at the opposite side. The landscape, though well merged with the figures, remains an incident, a means of setting off the action. What is described is essentially the life of people living in a pleasant landscape. The spirit of place is superbly grasped, and the typical Venetian glow is present. The influence of classical antiquity is slight—that is, the tendency is towards realism, full of a rich, deeply felt poetry.

**Sacred and Profane Love (B.).** Superb design, with Venetian glow comparatively absent. The general effect of the color is of a rather somber but harmonious richness, in which there is little suffusion. The organic use of color in the nude brings out the relatively less successful use of it in the draperies. There is a dignified, balanced use of expressive line in the draperies and the figures, which is striking but not dominant as in Botticelli. The tree is well used to divide the picture and throw shadows which enhance the general design. The picture is suffused with light, which in its gradations from the source to the other side of the picture also enhances the design and gives a general effect of luminousness. It is also skillfully used to form shadows which lend an effect of contrast to the light without ever falling into muddiness. The general light-design is marvelous, and it blends admirably with the secondary design of shadows, to which the masses in the center are subsidiary.





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The nude is fairly successful as a realized significant form. It resembles Tintoretto's nudes, but is less strong; it also challenges comparison with Giorgione's, as does the clothed figure. The general spirit is the same, but the effect of lightness combined with strength is suggested rather than realized. However, the influence of Giorgione is very apparent. The shape and the size of the picture would tend towards a fragmentary treatment, but the effect of fragmentariness is avoided by the extensive landscape, richly varied in units and total treatment.

**St. John the Baptist** (*A.V.*). This shows how even the mighty fall before Leonardo's example in light and line. It lacks Titian's solidity and tends toward Verrocchio's stilted drama, which was later taken over and refined by Leonardo.

**Bacchus and Ariadne** (*N.G.*). The general effect of the picture is less powerful and dignified than that of Titian's best works. This is due to the lesser simplicity of means, the relative lack of unity and the diminished conviction in the use of color as a compositional and structural element. The landscape in the background has a rather metallic quality, hard and obvious, and without the poetic charm and the grandeur of the best Titians. As a realization of complete rhythmic design, representing and giving the effect of motion, it is very successful; this is due to lines indicating gestures, folds of robes, girdles, scarfs, etc., all entering harmoniously into the masses.

However, with all this highly successful use of line and representation of movement, there is a sense of things lacking in most of the figures, with the result that the picture fails really to unify. For instance, the leopards seem superficial, lacking solidity. The landscape lacks glow. Spacing is less successfully obtained, and in the general composition there is an absence of balance in that there is no adequate mass, movement, color, in the left side of the canvas to make up for the drama and detailed representation on the right. The concentration on the right would not be so much felt if the landscape on the left, going away into the distance, were better realized in the points noted above. There is a superficial, obviously representative character in the sky, all the way up to the top of the canvas, which seems perfunctory, uninspired, rather than an expression of feeling. This weakness is not universal: parts of the canvas, for instance the robe under the jug in the left foreground, are superbly realized. The central figures, the left figure, all of these are marvels of color, line, fluidity, grace, charm, reality, from the standpoint of design and feeling. However, the technique is often exaggerated. Noteworthy instances are the use of light and of intensified gesture, even though these might be said to be intrinsic to the nature of the subject: Titian at his best is subtle in these respects and adapts and merges his means into a composite, satisfying whole. The indifferent quality is again illustrated in the figure just to the right of Bacchus and the cupid, the gown of which is, so far as color is concerned, an unreal, unsolid affair. The color is not exactly merely laid on, but it is not structural, as it is in Titian and Tintoretto at their best; the feeling, both in color-tone and solidity, is



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that of a good Poussin. To appreciate this, we need only compare this robe with that either of Bacchus or of Ariadne, and even these as color-units are by no means so solid as Titian's very best work—for instance, the gowns of the bending figures at right and left in the "Entombment." The leopards are for the most part merely painted animals, lacking in the feeling of reality, though this is not true of the feeling in the back feet. This picture as a whole suffers from the same sort of unevenness noted in Raphael's "Transfiguration."

**Christ and Magdalen (N.G.).** This picture shows the influence of Giorgione in practically every point, plus the brown color, tinged with green and varied with light, characteristic of Bellini. The landscape lacks the subtle blended grandeur and charm to be seen even in an early Giorgione. The colors are Giorgione's, but there is not that successful juxtaposition and distinction and distribution by which Giorgione achieves color-composition in his canvases. Compared with Giorgione, there is a lightness, a lack of solidity, in every phase of the picture, and similarly a resort to expression in the telling of the story of which Giorgione would not have been guilty. Still, there is an approach to his Arcadian quality, though it is felt to be lighter, less convincing, less charming, and obtained by means which are to a great extent somebody else's (for example, Bellini's, as above noted). In spite of all these defects, the picture is superb in many details, and as a whole. The kneeling figure is light and graceful in quality, and the design superb. The landscape here is finer in feeling and especially in compositional value, than in "Bacchus and Ariadne," and it functions in its deep distance to the left of the canvas as a balancing mass to the other masses in the picture. The robe on the Christ is beautifully rendered, achieving reality by color and design. Plastically, this is a better picture than "Bacchus and Ariadne."

**Perseus and Andromeda (W.)** There is a contrast here between the power and depth which constitutes Tintoretto's note, apparent in the falling figure and the dragon (both of these very strong and very Tintorettoesque in power and color), and the highly lighted nude which, while solid, is felt to fall short of Titian's best in three-dimensional weight. This nude, in contrast to Tintoretto's figures, both in form and in handling of color, is rendered so largely by means of light, is so graceful, with such a fluid rhythmic lightness, that it seems like a stronger Correggio. The whole background, however, is in the style of Tintoretto. The falling figure is much more complicated than the nude, but the very successful balance between the two nevertheless gives a wonderful rhythmic effect. The solidity of this nude grows upon inspection, and shows that Titian was not wholly dependent upon his deep color to attain three-dimensional form. There is very little red in the picture, and the Venetian glow, ordinarily obtained by overtones of red, is here achieved, though somewhat less successfully, by dark greens, together with blues interspersed with light, which give in connection with the greens a deep silvery glow.

## TINTORETTO

### TINTORETTO

**Suzanne at the Bath (L.).** Tintoretto's form appears especially in the treatment of the drapery and of the grasses and landscape in the right background, in the spacing, and in the ability to render dark areas without a fall into the muddiness and dullness of which Leonardo was characteristically guilty. The composition is typically Tintoretto, in the arrangement of the chief figure at one side of the canvas, without loss of perfect balance. This figure stands out in bright light, with vigorously executed modeling, but there is no overaccentuation, because the light is integrated with the color, and is balanced by the light-design in the picture as a whole.

**Portrait of the Artist (L.).** The tendency to distortion and characteristic swirl are clearly marked. The primary design is in the face, and is accomplished by light, by which the swellings and hollows are brought out: this design is rhythmically repeated in the beard. The distortion lends interest to the design, and aids in the realization of the third dimension and of tactile values. The sum total of the distortions is considerable. There is a subsidiary design in the lines of the coat, the lines down the front of the coat, and the folds of the sleeves. The figure is well separated from the background, partly by gradations of tone, partly by contrast in color, partly by the illumination. The indication of the third dimension, though subtle, is less subtle than in Titian's "Man with the Glove," and there is not the same economy of means in the painting as a whole. It is, however, a perfect example of the fusion of a richly decorative form in the structural form to make a strong plastic whole.

**Crucifixion (A.V.).** In this picture, the powerful Tintoretto effect is attained by terse expressive drawing, muscular accentuation, and organic use of color. The drama is repeated in all the units, so that the picture unifies very well as a whole. Every part of the canvas is active. The swirl is repeated in varying scales and the rhythmic effect of the picture is present in all the groups contained in it. These rhythmic units unite in a beautiful harmony, and there is in the entire picture a perfect equilibrium of all factors. We get the deep human values of drama and a powerfully stirred people: the total form is movement, power itself.

**Madonna with Saints (A.V.).** The color is strong and organically composed. The ordered spacing (the sequence of line and mass) is done with extreme simplicity and great effect. The power of the picture resides primarily in the rhythmic groups, one flowing towards the right and the other towards the left, centered by rhythmic masses. The compositional center is obtained by unusual means, the figures tending towards the left instead of being upright. No single figure stands out as it would in a portrait, but all are merged in the general effect. The landscape, of silvery light blues and dark greens, forms in itself a fine composition, with a dramatic sky and natural scene to serve as a background upon which the rhythmic groups that tell the story are projected. The unity between this background and these groups is perfect.



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**Paradise (L.).** The colors, blue, silver, ivory, with Tintoretto's peculiar reddish-brown, are as harmoniously rhythmic in themselves as the figures, the groups, the clouds. The painting is a harmony of color, mass, line, movement, all merged in a whirl of fluid movement. All these elements are observable in the individual groups entering into the general design, which is wonderfully rich, varied, moving, and mystical in quality. This is one of the greatest paintings in existence.

**Origin of the Milky Way (N.G.).** This is less powerful in the structural use of color than Tintoretto's best work. The design is unusual, having the general effect of the spokes of a wheel radiating from the child's body in the center.

**St. George and the Dragon (N.G.).** Strong, powerful drama and movement. Realized in ordered, measured rhythm of line, color, mass. The color-harmony pervades and unifies the design.

### PAOLO VERONESE

**Feast in the House of Levi (A.V.).** This is a powerful, real picture, in which the spirit of pageantry is achieved in a degree approaching grandeur. The space-composition is admirably done, without the exaggeration which mars Perugino's fresco in the Sistine Chapel. The compositional rhythms are varied and highly effective: the space is utilized to fill the canvas and leave no voids, with attendant impression of infinity or vastness. Each figure is real, and the realization is due to the use of plastic means.

**Jupiter Foudroyant les Crimes (L.).** The excessively turbulent motion is unsuccessful in itself, and is too reminiscent of Raphael: the design does not seem to be Paolo's own, and as a secondhand version of a form which is in itself inadequate when judged by the highest standards, it is doubly unsatisfactory. This is a departure from the usual standards of reality, quality, and personal expressiveness characteristic of Paolo Veronese.

**Flight from Sodom (L.)** The narrative—a flight from a burning city—is perfectly merged in the plastic form. Lines, gestures, colors, all flow from the fire. The design is fundamentally movement and rhythm, but because of the entirely adequate use of color, of light, of space, of modeling, this movement does not constitute an overaccentuation. What stands out superlatively is the drawing, which is only in part accomplished by line, though that element is strongly present: it differs from Botticelli's line by virtue of its integration with all the other qualities of painting. The rendering of surfaces shows the artist at his best: it is even more firm, lustrous, and brilliant than in the general run of his pictures.

### LORENZO LOTTO

**St. Jerome (L.).** The color is moderately well used as organic structure in the rocks and the foliage of the central tree, but in general the merging of color with structure is incomplete, and there is a resultant loss of solidity

## GUARDI

and conviction. The color itself, though it is not of the usual Venetian quality, is rather pleasing in the harmonies between the dark hues. The picture owes its moving power to its attractive design, in which masses, lines, and colors are used successfully to produce a harmony. Both the general pattern and the color give a modern note to it: the color and the realistic treatment of detail foreshadow Courbet, and there is also a very modern feeling for landscape as something interesting in its own right, and not as simply stage property for setting off the central figure.

## PIETRO LONGHI

**Lesson in Dancing (A.V.).** This is better as a *genre* picture, in the Dutch style, than most of the Seventeenth Century Dutch pictures. The effect is attained by a fairly successful use of color structurally, and by a simplification of design away from photographic literalism, such that a stiffness and rigidity is given the figures. In this the design is made more interesting, and a kind of naïveté and charm secured. The picture gives the feeling of the spirit of place and tells the story in good plastic terms: the story is convincing from the plastic standpoint, and there is also a suggestion of humor in it, though this is vague and kept in the background. Chardin strongly resembles Pietro Longhi. The spirit is that of the Eighteenth Century, but expressed in Venetian terms. The Venetian tradition is so successfully modified and put in solution that a new plastic form is achieved, of a very personal and *intime* character.

## CANALETTO

**The Grand Canal, the Salute (L.).** Canaletto caught the Venetian glow and also Claude's feeling for the grandeur and majesty of landscape. He had a feeling for space-composition, for architectural detail and for lights and shadows; also a sense of panorama. These things together constitute Canaletto's form. He is an important man because he told his story in plastic terms. He is not of the greatest importance because nothing he says, only his manner of saying it, indicates a powerful imagination, and his plastic means are not original, but are a fusion of elements from others as above noted.

## GUARDI

**The Doge Embarking on the Bucentaur (L.).** One does not find in Guardi the tendency towards the reddish overtones which constitute the Venetian glow, but a clear-cut, silvery atmosphere. His debt to the earlier Venetians is best shown in certain colors, which are found at their best in Titian and Tintoretto. In him they are diluted in intensity, in glow, in structural quality. His sense of space-composition is equal to that of Raphael or Perugino. He has a sense of the picturesque which is in itself beautiful, but he rendered it with considerable detail, and with such com-



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

mand of small-area painting that he can indicate an enormous outdoor space, including the multitudinous details that fill that space, such as gondolas, buildings, etc., all in a small canvas. Space-composition, clarity of atmosphere, ability to simplify objects by broad painting and yet give them a sense of reality—these things, in addition to the personality which he puts in his work, are what make him an important painter. He catches the spirit of place, tells about the details of it, and sets in that place the story in quite a personal manner. Guardi's form is as distinctive, as much an individual form, as Titian's, though of course infinitely less important.

### CORREGGIO

**Jupiter and Antiope** (*L.*). The light is overemphasized and the flow of line is so accentuated as to stand out in relative isolation. Highly competent workmanship in the execution of what is attempted, however, and an ample residue of other values, prevent the disbalance from destroying the genuinely aesthetic character of the picture. There is, however, an indication of Correggio's basically cheap strain, and also of the flabbiness of his figures.

**Danaë** (*B.*) This picture shows Correggio's mastery of his means. The effective use of line in giving grace to the nude, both in general and as an element of the design, is an instance of the rhythmic effect both within each figure and throughout the picture as a whole. While strong color is absent, the total effect is that of color well used to give form, a use that approaches the Titian-Tintoretto tradition. The use of light figures against a dark background is successful—a modified chiaroscuro; in general, light is used as a motive with rare success. The background is well varied to avoid monotony, and the rhythmic line in the draperies contributes to the general effect of rhythm. It repeats the line of the nude and the angel at the foot of the bed. Observed from many angles, these lines in the draperies, figures, etc., may be combined in various ways to form patterns, all of which unify with the general pattern of light. The picture suggests Tintoretto in the head and body of the nude, though it is, from the point of view of color or of general merging of the elements, less successfully realized in a three-dimensional form. It shows that a tendency to sweetness is compatible with a successful use of the plastic means.

### GUIDO RENI

**Dejaneira** (*L.*). This is valuable as a composition, but the composition is taken from Raphael, and has become an exercise in virtuosity. The movement is overdone, the color is thin and perfunctory, there is no real synthesis of elements into a harmonious whole, and attenuation of aesthetic character has gone almost to the limit.

### THE CARRACCI

**Diana and Calisto** (*L.*). Spacing, movement, rhythm, and figure-painting are good; there is, however, no quality in the rendering of the landscape,

## CRANACH

which looks as though it were painted on rock. As usual, there is the circumambient atmosphere of the Venetians, the light-modeling of Leonardo, and the softness of Raphael.

**Le Deluge (L.).** In this the swirling movement and rhythm of Paolo Veronese's "Flight from Sodom" are made a fetish of. They are not set off by the richness of color and distinction of design which ballast the movement in the prototype.

**La Chasse (L.).** The atmosphere, sky, and trees are from Titian. The shadows, however, are uninteresting by reason of their excessive darkness, and the picture is not properly unified. The total effect is melodramatic: the figures are not well drawn and the treatment of them is superficial, in spite of the interest of the design as a whole.

**The Apparition of the Virgin to St. Catherine and St. Luke (L.).** The composition and movement are taken from Raphael, the landscape is Venetian, and the painting of stuffs follows that of Tintoretto.

These paintings are perfect examples of eclecticism—a skilled use of Renaissance technique minus personal feeling.

## CRANACH

**Eve (U.).** The first effect is of an extraordinarily pleasing design, simple, naïve, and colorful, in spite of the almost complete absence of bright colors or tone. The line is fluid, graceful, and though sharply defined it is always felt as a part of the object, never as line in itself, as in Botticelli. This is especially evident in the line of the body against the background: the line seems to be, not only literally but in feeling, the place where the body comes to an end, instead of an extraneous factor separating the two. The general design is so made up that every part of the canvas is active. The background is alive and gives the effect of an infinite recession.

The figure is the determining factor in the design and through it plastic unity is attained. It is completely surrounded by space. It has a tendency towards naturalism, but it is idealized in its general effect, contrasting in that respect with the work of Courbet or Manet. It has only a suggestion of the feeling of flesh, except as regards one of the knees, which has some of the quality of natural flesh: this note is introduced in the interest of the design. Modeling is achieved by the use of light and shadow, but very subtly, and with avoidance of monotony. Within the figure itself there are an infinite number of appealing designs, such as the flowing hair seen through the quasi-triangular space between the left arm and the body; the unusual pattern of the crossed legs from the hips to the floor; the hair streaming down from the shoulder, which is a series of waves beginning at the neck, running down to the elbow and meeting the breast; the olive-branch in the left hand in relation to the leg back of it; the right hand with an apple, obviously Egyptian in feeling; a design formed by the position of the right and left arms by which the fingers are given an expressive character; the serpent in



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its coils around the branch giving in concentrated and complete form the rhythms indicated by the fluent lines in the body, etc.

Nothing in the picture is naturalistic: the apples are idealized and made into objects-in-themselves, not apples, which function as masses and colors harmonizing with the dark foreground and the brightly lighted nude. What is distinctive in the picture, to repeat, is the use of the nude as the focus for the design as a whole.

### POUSSIN

**The Arcadian Shepherds (L.).** The composition of this picture resembles that of Titian's "Entombment," but is less varied, less unified, and in general less moving. The rhythm, in line, in movement, and in color, is admirably done. The lighting is bright, but excessive emphasis is avoided by the distribution of light over the background as well as the foreground. The oval which frames in the central masses is made of light, making an effective pattern. The color is not unlike that of the Venetians though it is less rich. The same deficiency is to be discovered also in the weight or solidity of the figures; but this toning down of solidity fits well with the lightness of the whole plastic form.

**Holy Family (L.).** On the right there is a beginning of genuine landscape, that is, of nature interesting for itself. The spirit of place is well realized, and as something more than background, though it is still primarily background. The line is quite as expressive as in Degas: all of the figures are doing something, but sometimes overintently, so that the effect becomes theatrical. In the painting of the draperies there is a reminiscence of Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese. The feeling of the form and the light are Florentine, though with a suggestion of the Venetian glow, all of them given French quality, especially in the heightened dynamic quality, which is clearly something other than the Venetian repose. In manner of representing action the influence is primarily that of Raphael's line, though the light is not overaccentuated, and its contribution to the design is properly integrated with that of the other elements. The color, also, is more Venetian than Raphaellesque.

**Les Aveugles de Jérigo (L.).** Not conventionally balanced, but varied as in the Venetians. The feeling is classic, expressed by the means contributed by all the schools of the Renaissance. The Venetian glow, due to the use of color-overtones, is present. The drawing is that of Raphael, though with modifications from Michel Angelo, whose modeling makes the Raphaellesque line more convincing. All these Renaissance means are perfectly merged in the general effect. The figures are all acting characteristically, but the coördination of the line with other factors makes the movement and action more effective than in Raphael. The space-composition is essentially that of Raphael; the design is suggestive of Titian's "Entombment," and there is also the Venetian ability to make color function as a rhythmic and structural element as well as mere decoration or rendering of local qualities. The color, however, is more subdued than in the Venetians, and though it preserves its

## POUSSIN

richness, the impression created is rather one of delicacy than of effulgence. The color also contributes greatly to the movement.

The use of line to give unity and variety to the design is very striking. Christ's hand on the woman's head and hers on his girdle, like the tablecloth in Titian's "Supper at Emmaus," aid in tying the picture together. The other extended arms continue this binding-process, with added rhythm and variety. These lines, however, not only tie the picture together, but also add interest to the detail of the masses. As in Bellini, and much in the same manner, the play of light and shadow makes up a subsidiary pattern. The folds of the cloaks, as in Tintoretto, add to this interweaving of the elements of design, and heighten the effect of a wealth of variety fused in a rhythmic and harmonious unity.

The architectural background functions in much the same way as in Carpaccio and Masaccio, and the dark shadows cast by the building further contribute to the general design, as do the sequences of light falling upon the various masses.

**Triumph of Flora (L.).** In this there is a dearth of quality when compared with the best Poussins. The use of light is flashy, and the figures are very reminiscent of Uccello and Tintoretto. The rhythmic effects of line are good.

**Judgment of Solomon (L.).** The composition is like that of Raphael, and very conventional. The effects of line, especially in the arm of the woman who is pointing, are well done but are very Raphaelesque, with his characteristic overaccentuation and undistinguished color. The excessive linear emphasis is accompanied by an effect of inadequate modeling.

**Orfeo and Eurydice (L.).** The color is dryer than that which Poussin usually employs to harmonize with his designs. The aërial perspective and space-composition are very well done, but the light is overdramatic.

**Rape of the Sabines (L.).** The Venetian influence is to be observed in this in the metallic, clear-cut color of Tintoretto and Veronese. The movement is very well done in spite of overdramatization, which is in a measure required by the subject. There is some difficulty, however, in gathering into a single composition the large number of figures. Yet each group is a harmonious, rhythmic unit, and the separate groups unite in a harmonious, rhythmic design.

**The Adulteress Before Christ (L.).** The integration of the group as a whole with the background is very well done, as is the background itself. Within the group the synthesis is carried out by the use of line, but less successfully than elsewhere. The space-composition is as always very successful, with the relation of objects in the foreground, the middle distance, and the background very clearly indicated. The figures are light, but this lightness is essential for Poussin's form, which is that of a harmony of every possible effect, a harmony with which too great a development in any one respect would have interfered.

**Le Paradis Terrestre (L.).** This is less classic and more naturalistic than most of Poussin's pictures: the landscape effect is very modern in feeling and



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treatment. Even in this picture, though the naturalistic treatment of the landscape effect proper is really approached to a degree which is unusual in Poussin, the human story remains the most interesting feature by reason of the marvelous design in the two figures. This is simple, rhythmic, and well unified: it fits perfectly into the natural background, and is reinforced by the second design in the angel in the cloud, with which it is inseparably connected by plastic relations. The use of light and line in the picture as a whole is very effective. From the point of view of subject-matter, the attempt to render religious feeling by means so superficial as the introduction of the angel is childish, but the plastic integration of the two elements, natural and supernatural, is perfect, and is done with unobtrusive use of plastic means. This is his most successful landscape: the Barbizon painters show their indebtedness to it, as does Rousseau le Douanier in the rendering of foliage.

**Funeral of Phocion (L.).** The first glance reveals the landscape, with human figures apparently only incidental. But this is essentially a figure-painting, and it is the landscape that is only incidental. All the masses, the trees, towers, columns, walls, houses, function compositionally as figures.

**Cephalus and Aurora (N.G.).** There is a precious enamel quality to many Poussins, especially this fine porcelain-like one. Note Poussin's debt to the Venetians in the landscape in this picture. Poussin's profiles and figures are decidedly Greek in many cases, but differ from those of Mantegna in not looking so much like stone statues.

## UNKNOWN FLEMING

**Portrait of Maria Bonciani (U.).** The force, simplicity, and dignity of the Flemings, as against the Italians' delicacy, are well shown in this picture; indeed it is more akin to the stark realism of Courbet. There is the characteristic Flemish treatment of stuffs. The handling of the subject is very similar to that of Domenico Veneziano, with superior use of the plastic means in every respect but one, viz., concealment, by merging, of the light-and-shadow effect by which the third dimension is realized. This relatively greater obviousness of means is not entirely a disadvantage to the Fleming, because the lighting is an important factor in the design, and the face in consequence requires its high lighting on one side and deep shadow on the other. Judged by naturalistic standards, the large head and hand represent a distortion, but the distortion is obviously used to heighten the interest of the design.

## MEMLING

**Virgin Enthroned, with Two Angels (U.).** Probably because of the dark color and the convincing realism of detail, the religious feeling of the Italians is here expressed with less delicacy but more conviction. The angel on the right, compared with a similar figure by Leonardo, Botticelli or

## GERARD DAVID

Ghirlandaio, seems more characteristically angelic, more truly devout. The figure on the left is also more firm, human, appealing, dignified, than are the figures by the men just mentioned. There is a tendency towards miniature painting similar to that in Van Eyck.

**St. Benedict (U).** The successful relations of book, landscape, house, figure, window-sill, all form an organic whole which is real, appealing, and moving. Light bathes the whole picture, but does so naturally, without attracting our attention as light. An infinite variety of plastic means are employed with great skill. Modeling with light and shade blended with color gives a feeling of reality to the figure. The picture suffers in comparison with the "Man with the Glove" because of lesser simplicity of means; in comparison with Raphael's "Baldassare Castiglione," it is better painted, has a finer feeling for color values, and achieves a dignified, solid character far more appealingly human than the sentimental softness which may be seen even in Raphael's best work.

**Triptych, St. Sebastian, Resurrection, Ascension (L).** Characteristically Flemish in the feeling of color, tone, and general treatment. The drawing stands between the incisive line of Raphael and the swirl of Rubens.

## VAN EYCK

**Virgin and Donors (L).** The painting is clear-cut and literal. In the man's head, the form is characterized by solidity and color which is of the nature of tone and is realized through the manipulation of light; there is a crisp dignity, and a feeling of reality which is due to the absence of any accentuation. The same is true of the painting of the stuffs. The color is real and convincing in all parts of the picture; it is juicy, and there is a suffusion of hot color which is quite distinct from the Venetian glow. There is also a general suffusion of light, as well as a pattern formed of the bright light on the angel's head and wings. This is not annoying because it is properly motivated (the source of the light is shown) and there is ample compensating light elsewhere. Perspective is of almost photographic literalness. The detail is beautifully done, both in the flowers in the middle distance, and in the background. The picture belongs in some respects in the domain of miniature painting, but it is given scope by its quality and reality, which combine to give the impression of peace characteristic of great painting.

## GERARD DAVID

**The Supper at Cana (L).** This is a study in color which is dry but structurally used. The dryness gives an impression of coolness, and this extends to the figures, which seem lighter and less convincing because of it. This relative dryness or poverty must not be confused with light color, which, as in Roger van der Weyden, may be warm and real even in the total absence of the reddish shades.



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### RUBENS

**Kermesse (L.).** The first effect, in which the design becomes apparent, is one of rhythm and animation. The general feeling for landscape is clearly Venetian, but is sufficiently modified to make it Rubens's own. The Venetian glow is present, but is attenuated even more than in Paolo Veronese. In the grouping of the figures there is little resemblance to the Venetians, and the execution of the movement is also entirely different, being derived, probably, from the early Dutch.

**Un Tournoi (L.).** There is a resemblance to Claude. The Venetian influence is more in evidence here than it usually is, especially in the union of suffused glow and light; there is, however, in this a greater movement and rhythm in the drawing of the figures. There is the same movement and rhythm in the sky. The line is very fluid and is far from that of Raphael, being secured largely by the succession of masses; it is akin to the manner of the contemporary Rouault.

**La Fuite de Loth (L.).** The classic influence is very apparent; with modifications both by Raphael and by Rubens himself. All the influences of the Renaissance are here in solution. The figure at the right is like Raphael; the sky recalls Tintoretto, but it is saved from plagiarism by the different use of white, which forms a point of union between it and the masses below; the gown at the right is also like Tintoretto. Some of his lines are reminiscent of Titian. In general, this picture is not altogether successful: it seems thin and slight.

**Portrait of Suzanne Fourment (L.).** The Dutch influence is apparent in this picture. The background as usual goes back into the third dimension, with the curtain hanging only a short distance back, and the black section seeming to recede into infinity. In the lower part of the picture, the eye has more to feed on, because of the elaborately painted stuffs. This part of the picture is done by means quite other than those of the Venetians.

**The Four Philosophers (P.).** From the standpoint of composition of portrait groups, as from that of modern art, this is highly successful. It is characteristically Rubens in color, drawing, and the glow which was modified from the Venetian. The spacing, as it appears in the arrangement of the heads relative to one another at different levels in the picture, makes up an arresting design, the rhythmic lines giving a concrete example of variety in each element, which variety is fused into a perfect unity. The subjects are obviously posed, but not offensively so. There is a sort of conflict between this portrait-posing and the position of the hand near the center of the picture, which would indicate conversation; but this is irrelevant plastically because of the way in which that hand functions as form and movement, attained by the use of line and color: it is not the narrative but the plastic consideration which is important.

Throughout this picture, color is used structurally up to the limit of Rubens's ability, in texture, faces, hands, furs, etc. Every part of the canvas is alive. The two large comparatively unrelieved spots of black in the

gowns of the figures at right and left, and the space towards the foreground, looked at in the abstract, seem to be inactive dark areas, but they really serve as counterbalancing masses which set off the figures themselves and the brilliantly and attractively lighted landscape at the back. They are not monotonous or muddy but are relieved by modulation in the intensity of the black in various places. This picture shows Rubens's ability to modify successfully for his own purposes the Venetian tradition. Even in this, however, there is, in spite of the vigor, a tendency to stage-play, probably the result of the technique of the swirl, which diminishes the conviction and the powerful grasp of essentials which characterize Tintoretto, Titian, Rembrandt, and Cézanne.

**Judgment of Paris (N.G.).** There is in this a much greater reminiscence than usual of Titian in the structural use of color, the feeling for outdoor landscape, and of internal rhythmic design. The manner is characteristically Rubens's, but the swirl is so reduced that it does not appear as something overaccentuated or as a technical trick. In the back of the landscape to the right, in the sky and the trees, there is some of the Giorgione Arcadian quality, though the means have not the subtlety of Giorgione's. In the figures there is more of Raphael and less of Michel Angelo than usual, but the line is less sharp and more broken than Raphael's. This simplicity gives a fluid grace to the three nudes which compares well with that of Titian or even of Giorgione, though the structural use of color is not so good. In the feeling of the textures, too, there is a simplification of Rubens's usual technical manner, which gives a delicacy quite its own, and an added charm everywhere in the picture. In the figure seated at the tree, there is a grace and charm akin to that of Poussin, plus a more convincing three-dimensional character, attained by the use of color. The group of which this figure is one is beautifully composed in the Raphael manner, but is more original, more solid, infinitely richer in color-values. Throughout the picture there is a succession of rhythms, in whatever area may be selected, and these rhythms merge, expand, intertwine into a general rhythmic quality which dominates the picture.

The general tendency towards delicacy is characteristic also of the color, which, though unquestionably that of Rubens, is free from the suggestion of stridency which it so often has elsewhere in his work. The color functions not only locally but as a sort of Venetian glow, pervading the whole canvas; these overtones take the place of brighter, stronger, more frequently repeated color-spots in unifying the canvas. This Giorgionesque quality increases upon further inspection and analysis, and the feeling of placidity and charm which it gives is perhaps more nearly equal to Giorgione's own than anything even in Titian, though Rubens's characteristic vigor prevents it from ever reaching the subtlety, delicacy, and the majesty with which Giorgione realized the natural setting for lyric subject-matter. It is also inferior in that it does not appear to equal advantage at all distances: when the picture is viewed from half way across the room, the lyric quality of the landscape,



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

though pronounced, is weaker, and there is also diminution of the solidity of the nudes—they are lighter, less solid, less real, than the figures of either Titian or Giorgione. Giorgione's lyric charm does not diminish at any distance within the ordinary range of vision.

In the use of light in this picture there is the same general tendency towards the pattern, achieved by the duplication of units of light, shade, and color, which constitutes the dominant note in Bellini's "Sacred Conversation." Here the pattern is not so obvious as in the Bellini, is more irregular, and because of the brighter tints is more colorful. The use of the light, in connection with shadow, in the modeling of the nudes, is extraordinarily subtle. The whole effect of pattern made up of color, light, and shadow, scattered in various-sized units throughout the picture, is held together by the color overtones already described, and results in a rare degree of unification.

**Peace Driving Away the Horrors of War (N.G.).** The powerful, Titian-like figures and the Tintoretto-like sky, make this picture worthy of a place among the best of the Renaissance masterpieces. It shows Rubens's derivation from the above-mentioned painters, and it shows also his derivation from the Flemish in the still-life of fruits, etc., and in the leopard, with a realistic rendering everywhere of form, texture, etc. This is the most striking instance of the Flemish influence upon Rubens, but the Flemish qualities are so merged with the solidity of the Venetians and of Rubens himself that the effect is clearly his own.

**Autumn, Château de Steen (N.G.).** In this there is a richness, a deep juicy color, which by its quality and manner of use in comparatively small areas makes it possible to say with safety that Constable's best efforts were inspired by Rubens.

## VELASQUEZ

**Infanta Marguerita (L.).** The design is made up of the figure and objects on a black background, which goes off into infinity: the child's hand rests on the chair and ties the figure to it compositionally. This effect of infinity gives space-composition in its highest form. The background is of solid, not mottled or otherwise differentiated color. These factors, masses, color, and space, form the main design.

The head is a fine and delicate but convincing three-dimensional form, though it is not the rounded form of either Giotto or Titian. The form is attained by a fusion of light, shadow, and color, with no element accentuated. An interesting design secondary in importance only to the first is that made up of the stripes in the dress, chiefly black, and broken by the ornaments in the ruching, with the white lines meeting the black at various angles, together with the pink bows on the chest and wrist, and the pink flowers in the hand. Subsidiary to this second design is an infinite series of designs in various parts of the dress, no two of them alike, all harmonized with each other, and all united in the larger design.

The colors are rich, alive, sparkling; they are harmoniously blended, and

## VELASQUEZ

form a design. The whites are like old, darkened ivory with a rich patine, the blacks like ebony with a patine, the pinks like roses dulled into richness. The red in the chair has the look, the feel, the dull patine of old rich velvet, and gives to the chair solid, convincing reality. The meaning and use of color were clearly learned by Velasquez from the Venetians, but while in the Venetians we feel color as the essential part of the structure, here all trace of obviousness is gone, and we feel it an essential but unobtrusive element. It is not laid-on, but its integral or structural character is so perfectly in solution that the fact of its function does not spring out at us.

The solidity of the objects depicted show that tactile values are capable of realization in painting in which the accentuation of modeling and perspective is so slight that it almost seems flat, though it is not really such. Perspective is used only slightly, but to the extent that it is needed: the meager indications of it are an instance of the art that conceals art. Similarly with the modeling: there is an absence of any obvious use of light and shadow, but the solidity is there, as something felt rather than perceived, as we feel the solidity of the real material things about us but do not distinguish the qualities which make them appear solid. This supreme art in concealment of the means is accomplished by using only the barest essentials, stripped of everything superficial: it is simplification carried down to rock-bottom essentials of "form," of what makes a thing what it is, distinct from every other thing. This grasp of the essence of the individual thing Velasquez had above every other painter. With the aid of a mastery of paint also unequalled by any other painter, he grasped the fundamental, ignored the obvious, simplified everything to its basic forms, and combined these in order and measure, with intelligence, knowledge, and a deep insight into the meaning of things.

This picture has a universal appeal—balance, dignity, peace, charm, mystery, all expressed in orderly, convincing plastic terms, without virtuosity or sentiment. His detached realism moves us as emotion expressed never does. He makes us see and feel with our mind, and the emotional stir is just what the situation in the real world would arouse, could we but see it with his deeper vision and greater intellect.

**Woman with the Fan (W.).** This painting is convincing, but with a tendency to surface prettiness which makes it inferior to the "Infanta Margarita." The head is more realistically painted: that is, there is more of the feeling of actual flesh, as in other painters, than in Velasquez at his best. The painting of the gloved hands, with the paint broad and rather thick, and with little regard to fineness of detail, makes an interesting note in the composition; however, the sense that the gloves do not fit the hands gives an effect of crudeness. The gloves are painted with a beautiful light blue in which light predominates, and gives them a rich, solid, sober feeling plastically. Viewed from near by, the shawl which envelops the head seems drier than Velasquez's painting at its best, and compared with the gloves and bow of ribbon it appears lacking in richness; when seen from a distance,



however, it has the quality needed to carry the effect. The dress is richly painted, but less so than the gloves and ribbon. The relation between the figure and background is good, but the background, which is of a dark gray, gives the effect of a wall rather than of infinity as in the "Infanta Marguerita." The whole painting is simple and dignified, and shows Velasquez's feeling for essential qualities, but it falls short of the extreme simplification which is characteristic of him at his best. It shows the origin of Goya in composition and treatment, but is more real, more solid, and stronger.

**Don Baltasar Carlos in the Riding-School (W.).** The simplification characteristic of Velasquez at his best is superbly illustrated in the painting of the horse, and especially of the figure in all its details, hat, face, clothes, etc. That figure reveals the origin of Goya and Manet. Impressionism is forecasted also in the treatment of the various figures in the background, which are not only blurred in detail, but broadly treated with absence of details. Perspective is adequate but not especially emphasized. The black horse, placed on the subtly rich gray background which is interspersed with figures in various colors, including a slight note of red, makes a striking contrast. There is a sort of aërial atmosphere in the whole picture, reminiscent of both Masaccio and the Venetians, but not especially emphasized. Instead of a real Venetian glow, we have a general richness, and this pervades the picture and gives a note of quiet dignity, subtlety, peacefulness.

**Don Baltasar Carlos in Infancy (W.).** The immediately striking effect in this picture is that of the spacing and composition. This is realized as few men could have done it, considering that the background is of a deep brown color. The tassel seems to hang in mid-air, the feather floats away from the chair, and this effect of distance is achieved only by means of a dark shadow. The figure stands in the room, completely surrounded by an atmosphere which has the quality of infinity realized only by the greatest painters. The canvas is divided into two parts: on the left is the hat and the curtain that reaches to the ground; on the right, the curtain is raised and tied with the tassel, and in the area thus disclosed is the indication of space reaching away to infinity. The contrast between this space and the opposing curtain, the folds of which are clearly discernible, makes up a superb composition, which in spite of the variety of elements is simple and perfectly unified.

The feeling of everything is soft and velvety. There is the same simplification as in the "Infanta Marguerita," but the function of the textures is different from their function in that picture, in which they operated as units in the composition and design. Here the stuffs are rather blurred, with details omitted, and the value is rather tactile, to give the feeling of soft velvetiness. The color and general effect of the gown is duplicated to the left by the plume and the lighted corner of the seat. The subject-matter and the means by which it is rendered are alike characterized by simplicity, charm, dignity, and reality. In Hals's "Laughing Cavalier" (see analysis, page 450) the textural effects are literal, detailed, and striking; in this picture, with simplification so complete that we are at a loss to detect the





Giorgione

Castelfranco

Analysis, page 413





Raphael

Vatican

Analysis, page 398





Titian

I Frari, Venice

Analysis, page 416





Cranach

Uffizi

Analysis, page 431

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## REMBRANDT

means at all, the essential quality of the material is even more faithfully rendered, and with much better aesthetic effect.

The influence of the Venetians is apparent in various places, including the red scarf around the baby's body, the bottom of the foot-stool, and the plume. It consists in the organic use of color simplified in Velasquez's unique manner.

### REMBRANDT

**The Unmerciful Servant (W.).** The first effect is that of a superb design (disposition of masses, color, spaces, etc.), very simple, and made up of the figure on the left, perfectly balanced by the three figures on the right, which function as a single compositional element or unit in relation to the figure on the left, rather than as three separate figures. Those three figures show Rembrandt's supreme mastery of space-composition, of fluid rhythmic grace, of line, and of a marvelous color-sense. None of the colors is brilliant. They proceed from darkness to varying degrees of light and back again to darkness in a pleasing, graceful flow, reinforced by lines, spots of light, and masses, all tending to form a harmonious design which gives to that group of three figures a unique power even for Rembrandt. The three heads seem to rise from one body, regarded as a mass, yet there is no question but that the three heads belong to three different people. There is a lightness, a delicacy, a charm, a dignity, a placid intentness to all these figures which is arresting at first and sustains that effect after analysis of the plastic means by which it is accomplished. The figure on the left is all lightness, delicacy, floating dignified peace. The hand floats in the air. The way the color in it functions in relation to the lighter colors on the opposite side is marvelous: both compositionally and with regard to subject-matter it makes that figure dominate the group as a whole.

Rembrandt's mastery in the use of light and shade to attain three-dimensional solidity is here exemplified in the highest degree in every part of the canvas, as is also his unique power to differentiate objects from one another when they are close together in color-values. This chiaroscuro does not seem a technical device, but the only possible means for achieving the particular effect aimed at. The simplicity of this picture is amazing, overpowering. The colors are rich and glowing, and the composite effect is one of compelling reality; it is loaded with the emotion which Rembrandt gives more than any other painter. It is a perfect example of the integration of plastic values with those of subject-matter.

**Hendrickje Stoffels (L.).** The effect of this picture is immediately and permanently arresting. It consists of a rich golden design made of face and chest, a design which slopes gently towards each shoulder and so, with no visible contours, into the black background. The background is not felt as color but as infinite space: it seems as though there were nothing physical there at all. The design continues, with the golden quality gradually merged into a brown tempered with gold, down to the end of the hand, where the rich gold again emerges, though fainter than in the face and chest. This



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simple and arresting design, when examined, displays a new design in every area, the source of which is at first elusive: lines are few and extremely unpronounced; color is there only in the form of tone. The trick is turned by an extraordinary power for using light and shadow, in every conceivable degree of variation to attain an infinite variety of patterns and designs. The method is far removed from that of Velasquez, of clean-cut unemotional detachment. Every area in this painting is a source of wonder and mystery; we *feel* the wonder and mystery—we only see the objective fact that calls them up in a way that we cannot explain. Here too is simplicity, but it is not, as in Velasquez, especially directed to the physical representation of objects: it is a simplicity plus a rendering of that simplicity by technical means extremely simple in themselves and loaded with the emotion-provoking power of the object portrayed rather than with Velasquez's depiction of physical essences.

The physical values are rendered with great command of paint, and Rembrandt is as great a realist as Velasquez in making us see and feel the physical basis of things; but no flesh ever looked like that. And yet no flesh ever showed more clearly its origin in the supernatural in which we all believe in our mystical moments. In all this, in the unreal-real hair, face, nose, eyes, mouth, is that pervasive, indefinable addition which ties our mystic, religious nature to this world by a definite, specific, visible objective fact which is in front of our eyes, in the painting. The expression of the mouth is not sentiment, it is the feeling of the person herself and the same feeling that we have in looking at it. It is mysterious, noble, sublime, all merged into a religious experience, without reference to or use of adventitious aids like story-telling or the use of religious episodes. Rembrandt paints in terms of the broadest universal human values.

**Woman Bathing (N.G.).** In this picture there is a double use of light not usually pointed out in Rembrandt. The light is in part used as an independent element in design in the treatment of the shirt and the chest; in the face, the legs, and the rest of the figure it is used as chiaroscuro.

**The Supper at Emmaus (L.).** In this there is complete functional activity of every part of the picture, with plastic and human values of the very highest quality. Throughout, the tone functions as color. The integration of subject-matter of a high intrinsic value with plastic form could hardly be improved upon. The keynote of the picture, as of Rembrandt's work generally, is dignity.

### METSU

**Still-Life (L.).** This still-life shows the start of the movement that produced Chardin. It has great delicacy and at the same time power and reality.

### TERBORG

**Concert (L.).** In the field of *genre* Terborg's powers are of high order. This picture contains anticipations of Watteau and Fragonard. The painting

## WATTEAU

of stuffs is very well done: the tablecloth contains just enough elaboration of detail and brightness of color to enable it, as a mass, to function harmoniously with the rest of the picture, the figures, background, etc. The result is a high degree of unity.

## VERKOLIE

**Interior (L.).** In this there is a more detailed painting of stuffs than in the previous picture, but elsewhere there is a comparative thinness and lack of quality, and the result is a loss of balance and an impression of mere virtuosity.

## PETER DE HOOCH

**Dutch Interior (L.).** In this all the elements of the Dutch School are in fusion. Peter de Hooch is a master of pattern, in which there is a foretaste of cubism. The use of straight lines meeting at angles and not in curves is very effective.

## VERMEER

**The Lacemaker (L.).** This picture is essentially *genre* but is characterized by very great ability to use paint. The balance of means is perfect, and the use of light, though very effective, avoids either overaccentuation or virtuosity.

## BROUWER

**Le Pansement (L.).** The Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro is here adapted to *genre*-painting, with terse, simplified drawing which is very powerful. There is, however, the tendency characteristic of the school to lavish a high degree of skill upon situations which in themselves approach melodrama.

## WATTEAU

**La Gamme d'Amour (N.G.).** The influence of Rubens and the Venetians is strongly present, attenuated to the Eighteenth Century delicacy. The robes are well realized in organic color. The glow at the back is more reminiscent of the Venetians than of Rubens. The whole picture is a graceful, rhythmic movement of color, line, mass.

**Jupiter and Antiope (L.).** This illustrates the degree in which Watteau's preoccupation with technique makes him inferior to Fragonard in point of solidity and reality.

**Embarkation for Cythera (L.).** The first thing that strikes the observer about this picture is the Venetian feeling in the treatment of the landscape, with the influence of Claude in the direction of dignity, grandeur, and mystery. Coypel's romantic tendency is heightened by the use of the Rubens swirl. There is less solidity than in Rubens: the picture is softer, less robust, more feminine, both in general effect and in the drawing of the figures. There is, however, harmony in the treatment of the figures. Hence the Watteau



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

form, idyllic, romantic, feminine. A part of this form is also the diffuseness of his outlines, in which there is an anticipation of the impressionists, and which distinguishes him from Boucher, who is always sharp, cameo-like.

### VAN LOO

**A Halt Out Hunting (L.).** Here the tradition of Lancret is used with less than Lancret's ability. The colors are those of a chromo.

### LE MOYNE

**Juno, Iris and Flora (L.).** In this picture, the Rubens tradition falls away much further than in Boucher. The command of means is here inadequate to render the essence of the things depicted. The drawing is inexpressive, the color slight and unconvincing. What particularly tells against him is that he emulates men with whom he is quite unable to bear comparison, not so much because of a lack of technical skill as because he has not the intelligence which would compensate for the lack of the essence of the tradition; the effect of this is artificiality. He can do no more than suggest the *joie de vivre* which is a part of the Rubens tradition.

### BOUCHER

**Renaud and Armide (L.).** The Rubens tradition is here, but there is a weakening of the characteristic Rubens traits: the painting has a superficial character and looks as if it were laid on china. The Rubens tendency to prettiness, which in Rubens himself at his best is in abeyance, is here fully materialized. The sweetness and slightness are emphasized by the essentially trivial subjects, and these, being unreal, are uninteresting.

**Pastoral (L.).** In this picture there is idyllic character, making for a surface charm, which however remains superficial. The line is expressive, and the figures all seem to be doing something, but the means by which action is represented are specious, and the action is slight. The execution may be called crisp.

### COYPEL

**Esther Before Ahasuerus (L.).** In this there is an attenuation of the Dutch and Flemish treatment of stuffs, with something of the Venetian glow. There is overdramatization, with extreme artificiality and unreality. A monumental subject is attempted, but both in the subject and in the use of the means there is exaggeration to the point of grotesqueness.

### LANCRET

**Autumn (L.).** Lancret adds to the influences visible in Watteau and Boucher that of the Dutch *genre*-painters. These influences, plus the tendency to elongate his figures, make up a strong and personal form.

## CHARDIN

### GREUZE

**Village Betrothal (L.).** In this picture, the classic Poussin tradition has gone far on the road to degeneration. The color is very bad and the skillful drawing can give no more than an impression of drama. Except in the drawing of the figures, and in the composition, which though stereotyped is good, there is a complete lack of quality, and this unevenness destroys the unity of the picture. The expressive drawing is not integrated with any other plastic qualities.

### FRAGONARD

**The Vow to Cupid (L.).** This picture is not to be considered realistically, the stiffness of the form being obviously determined by compositional considerations. The general effect, compared with Rubens, is that of dryness, and there is less depth, intensity, and juciness of color than in Rubens. There is also a general tendency towards delicacy.

The composition is extremely good, with entirely unacademic disposition of objects. There is no bilateral symmetry: every part of the canvas on which the eye falls is varied, and there is not a square inch of the picture that is not alive and moving. Far removed as it is from literal realism, the picture is highly animated. The Rubens tradition has been attenuated to give the typical Fragonard form.

**Bathers (L.).** The form of this is obviously influenced by Rubens. All Fragonard's characteristics are illustrated here, the swirl, the fine sense of design, the color, the line, the sprightliness of effect, the skillful modeling, the solidity combined with lightness.

### RIGAUD

**Philippe V (L.).** The Rubens tradition is here, diluted by Van Dyck. It has sunk to the quintessence of meretricious beauty, with an effect of foppishness.

## CHARDIN

**Ustensiles Variés (L.).** The composition is unconventional: there is no orderly, symmetrical distribution of masses, but a geometrical pattern with straight rectangular lines. There is a wonderful division of space, with each space made interesting by the varying dimensions, shapes, etc. The space-composition is well done in spite of the concentration of objects: every object has its own space, and there is no impression of jumbling. There is a feeling of clarity through the whole picture, with successful atmospheric effect, made bright by colors varying from the white of the pitcher to the gray of the background. The color functions at first sight, in the dominant blue of the pattern on the top of the box, the brown of the table, and the deep red of the box itself. The quality of the color is choice and varied, though not essentially bright. The picture is a masterpiece of the first rank because



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of the successful combination of many objects, the variety, the masterly handling of stuffs, with modeling and perspective to give the effect of reality and of unity throughout. The picture has charm and dignity and, as always in Chardin, harmony.

### HALS

**La Bohémienne (L.).** The lights and shadows in the face are unified into a pattern, which is part of a larger design, in itself double. First, there is the effect of the picture as a whole; then the contrast of the brightly colored textures against the dark background of the gown. The placing of the figure against the background is very well done, as is the adaptation of the color and tone of the dark gown to the slightly darker background of the picture as a whole. The handling of paint is admirable, as is the technical proficiency in general: the painting of stuffs, especially, is extraordinarily skilled and literal. On the other hand, the background is uninteresting, so that there is resort to the employment of specious devices in order to relieve the monotony. In the face there is sufficient characteristic individual expression to convey a universal value in easily recognizable form. The picture, however, lacks the warmth and the deeper human values characteristic of the masters. Compared with great painters such as Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals seems flashy, dry, and brittle.

**Laughing Cavalier (W.).** The use of the characteristic Hals technique of brushwork in the face here yields a form less obvious in means of execution, and so more convincing, than is usual with him. It is perhaps also the best realization of the almost photographic rendering of stuffs, varied in color, pattern, and intricate design. There is more reality in these stuffs than in those of the other Dutchmen, for example, De Keyser, in whom they seem to be the main theme of the painting. Here they merely strike us as beautiful, rich, of varied colors, designs, and patterns, which go well with the broader treatment of the face, in which the brush-strokes are visible but are not too much accentuated. This combination of rather broad painting in the face and miniature-like painting in the clothes is successfully unified and offers a striking contrast. This is a wonderful achievement in technique, shows Hals's mastery of stuff-painting as better than that of any of the other Dutch artists, and proves that he was a supreme master of the use of paint and a great artist in achieving a form by the means just noted. Nevertheless, in this as in all his work, there is a certain obvious virtuosity. Neither as a painter nor as an artist is he in the same class with Velasquez.

### GOYA

**Portrait of Dr. Galos (B.F.) (No. 5<sup>1</sup>).** Goya's characteristics are represented in the portrait of Dr. Galos, which, as Goya wrote on the picture, was painted "in his eightieth year, in 1826." This painting, or one like it,

<sup>1</sup> In the analyses of pictures belonging to the Barnes Foundation, the catalogue-number in the Foundation's collection is given.

## INGRES

served as the model for the academic imitations of the Stuarts, Peales and other virtuosos.

The figure is placed near the center of the canvas, and the composition is made up of a series of masses and colors that achieve a simple but high-grade design. The only mass, besides the figure, is an object in contrasting color, which may be either a table or part of a bench. The background is gray, mottled with light to relieve it of monotony. The face has a fine three-dimensional solidity attained by the use of modeling, done chiefly with light, line and color, but relieved from the one-piece mass-effect by variations in the use of these plastic means; these variations form a design. That design is noticeable both at a distance and upon close inspection, but the effect at a distance is of a convincing solid reality. The color of the face is expressive of rugged health, the neck is covered with a stock of white, diaphanous, delicate material, the coat is a deep bluish-black relieved by gold buttons. This figure in relation to the mottled gray background, and the red table in the back, makes a plastic form which was taken from Velasquez but is rendered in Goya's own highly expressive drawing, rather than in Velasquez's impersonal detached manner. The relation of the body to the background and the table in the back is to be found almost in exact duplicate in Velasquez's painting of "Don Baltasar Carlos in Infancy," especially as regards space-composition: the space is rendered subtly and with a degree of delicacy and appropriateness required by the situation. Here, as always with Goya, the light is used in such a way that it forms a pattern in itself and contributes to the total aesthetic effect of the picture. In this portrait the light is concentrated on the face, the stock, and the buttons, and is toned down in the background, so that the whole painting has good general illumination, the light forming an appealing pattern. Goya's especial interest in the depiction of psychological traits is well represented here. Without specious use of the line in psychological characterization, line, color and light are here used to portray a strong, solid, substantial personality, both in the expression of the face and in the drawing of the body. In the portrait of the "Royal Family of Charles IV," Goya represents human meanness, ugliness and stupidity in people dressed up in the highly ornate finery of that royal group. What saves these pictures from being mere illustrations is the fact that the expression is rendered by legitimate means and is not an end in itself. It makes a unity which enters into harmonious relations with the other plastic factors, and thus produces a plastic form that has an appeal of its own aside from any illustrative element.

## INGRES

**Portrait of Madame Rivière (L.).** This is cold and formal, but interesting because of the linear effects. The woman's dress is a rhythmic pattern of lines; there is also rhythm between the dress and the shawl, a tapestry-effect, which extends around her left arm, and is saved from monotony by the variety of its rhythms. The superimposed pattern in the shawl is almost



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photographic, but it is not banal because of the flowing lines in the folds, juxtaposed with a very rich blue.

The coldness of Ingres is well illustrated by the painting of flesh in this picture as compared with that in the adjacent "Death of Sardanapalus," by Delacroix. The two men, with practically the same means at their command, that is, line, white paint, and shadows, secure totally different effects. Delacroix's looks like a picture of rich human flesh, with the color part of the substance, while Ingres's looks like an arabesque on an alabaster wall. The "Portrait of Madame Rivière" is to be considered chiefly as a unity of linear designs.

**La Source (L.).** There is a total lack of feeling: the background looks like painted scenery and has none of the quality of rocks; the color is drab and superficial.

**Œdipus and the Sphinx (L.).** The feeling in the nude is that of Leonardo, with the same use of light and shade in modeling. The drawing is more clear-cut, like Raphael's.

### DELACROIX

**Les Femmes d'Alger (L.).** There is a beautiful design, but upon analysis there is a loss of interest because of reminiscences of familiar *genre*-pictures. The distribution of masses gives an effective balance, although there is an excess of objects on one side of the canvas. There is no tendency towards literal reproduction of textures or stuffs, as in Ingres; the tendency is towards impressionism. There is a fine variety of different kinds of planes and of vertical, horizontal, and curvilinear lines. The lighting is good, and a pleasing pattern is made up of the different degrees of lighting in the different figures. There are no monotonous parts of the canvas. On the floor a pattern is made up of lights and shadows upon the feet, rugs, and parquetry. The left wall is made interesting by the use of light, which relieves it from monotony, by the picture on the upper part, by the red and black door, and by the object over the door. In other words, in every part of the picture, there is a variety of objects all of which are interesting.

As regards color, the first effect is one of richness. We get a decided glow, an atmosphere, a swimming color. This color is finely proportioned and functions in all parts of the canvas, so that harmony of color results in each object, with a total effect of harmony in the picture as a whole; the color also unifies the composition in this picture as it does not in the "Death of Sardanapalus." The color is rather broken instead of being laid on in large masses; this is probably due to the influence of Constable, and marks the coming of impressionism. In the painting of the cushion the impressionistic manner is almost fully developed. In the kneeling figure to the right of the center, in the woman's blouse, the general manner of treatment is conventional, but elsewhere the tendency is towards the accentuation of lighted spots, in the manner afterwards adopted by Claude Monet.

This picture is of interest chiefly for technical reasons. In this, we

## MANET

are at the opposite extreme from the Castelfranco Giorgione, in which there is no technical innovation, but instead a use of conventional means so personal and effective that there is nothing secondhand or shopworn about the picture. In "Les Femmes d'Alger" there is essential conventionality in spite of the masterly handling of plastic novelties and the superb composing by means of color. In Manet's "Olympia" there is the same tendency towards a pose, but Manet poses his figures only superficially: they function so much in the design that the plastic quality overbalances the posed quality.

**Naufrage de Don Juan** (*L.*). There is a finely proportioned color active in all parts of the canvas. In the men in the boat, color is used to reinforce movement.

## COURBET

**La Source** (*L.*). This picture suggests Diaz and also Tintoretto's "Suzanne at the Bath." But the poetic and the dramatic traditions of these two men have been so merged, and the relevant elements in them so fused, without overemphasis or virtuosity, that the effect is one of profound reality.

**The Painter's Studio** (*L.*). In this picture Courbet took Corot's figures and put blood and iron in them. There are also in solution here Leonardo, Bronzino, Tintoretto, Velasquez, and others. There is a fine spaciousness, economy of means, successful modulation of the wall of the room by means of color and light, with a reminiscence of Piero della Francesca in the blue and silver tones. The picture unifies because from one end of the canvas to the other we have a sweeping line, rhythmic in quality, leading to the nude and there breaking up into a set of radiating lines. It passes through the painter himself at the easel, takes a sudden drop to the little boy's head, and follows an almost straight line to the woman asleep, whence it jumps to the man's high hat and continues by a series of short breaks to the other side of the canvas. On the left it is complicated by a set of arabesques in line which solicit the attention and carry it into the figures, somewhat in the manner of Ingres's "Le Bain Turc." The Courbet is preferable to the Ingres because in the latter the form is almost purely linear, whereas Courbet avails himself of every one of the plastic means. On a much larger scale Courbet has done, with his drawing, what Titian did in the "Entombment," and Poussin in "Les Aveugles de Jérigo."

In the left part of the painting, in the background, there is in solution the Venetian glow, which arrests us for a moment but carries the eye down to the group of figures at the left, with the glow itself interestingly varied in different parts of the canvas. There is a variation in the nuances from almost nothing to a deep and rich glow among the trees.

## MANET

**Olympia** (*L.*). The first effect is of novelty—the picture does not look like other paintings. The reasons for this are not immediately obvious. There is



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nothing revolutionary in the general design, which consists of a central figure used as a unifying element in a picture clearly divided in two parts, with sufficient masses on either side to obtain symmetrical balance though without exact duplication of masses. The novelty is obviously in the means—one or more plastic means not used in the manner customary with previous painters. The central figure is what chiefly solicits our attention, and it is there that we first find new points.

This is a strange, rigid, angular figure, flat-looking but not really flat. It is bent in a rigid angle in the middle, with a pert-looking posed head, and no modeling by the usual aid of light, shade, and color. Yet, in spite of its apparent unnaturalness, this figure has a stark reality; it gives the effect of what is portrayed without literal representation; it has a Velasquez-like reality, plus something more. This is accomplished by means of the simplification which came from Velasquez, with retention of sufficient detail of representation to render it intelligible. Upon that simplification a new form, which is distinctively that of Manet, is built. Dark shadows are abolished and color is substituted. The picture is flatter than any of Velasquez's, yet it is of three-dimensional value; it is not modeled as a figure by Courbet would be, yet it is obviously solid. We find only the fewest possible lines—in shoulders, breast, legs—which are never long, not sharply defined, but broken in contour. The figure lives as a plastic unit.

The design, though it seems not very novel at first, is really quite unusual in many ways. The negro's head, serving as a balancing mass to the nude's head and chest and as the central figure in the right half of the painting, is black, and is made blacker by the pink gown. From the knees the figure of the nude is continued into the negro's upper trunk, and as a whole the negro forms a linear and mass unit made more picturesque by the bouquet. Her head, together with the pink gown against a green background of curtains, is an extraordinary rendering of color-values and space-values, and this design is enriched by the vague folds in the curtains and dress. Each point of the canvas is alive with compositional effects—the black cat standing on the white bed and against the green background is another triumph of color and space values. The sharp division by line in center gives two distinct pictures, one on each side—to left the nude's head and trunk against a brown, vaguely flowered background, to right, the separate design of the negro as already described. These two pictures are unified by the body of the nude extending from the upper middle of the left picture to the lower middle of the right picture, in its stark, picturesque, angular reality. The nude is paralleled and supported by the bed with its great mass of pillows and ivory-colored drapery with embroidered, flowery pattern. This contrasts with the nude in colors and is harmonized with it in linear rhythms, masses, degree of solidity in pillow, mattress, etc. This design is reinforced compositionally by the angle of red stuff showing at the bottom of the canvas and on a line with the nude's arm and head and chest, and by the green drapery in folds at the upper left of the canvas.

## CONSTABLE

All this is straight, honest, skilled use of plastic means to attain a plastic quality which is a thing in itself, independent of any narrative interest, which may be either relevant or irrelevant. It is a powerful painting from any standpoint, and the power does not diminish with observation. There are many good traditions here, but in solution. There is Velasquez's simplicity, Courbet's stark realism; there is feeling for character, for quality of painting, there is terse expressive drawing, broad painting, diffusion of light in the manner contributed by impressionism, and used so broadly and embracingly that it is the light, in this distinctive use, that gives the painting its characteristic power. It is fluid grace achieved by angularity and stiffness merged in a new and distinctive plastic form.

## CLAUDE LORRAIN

**Village Fête (L.).** Claude's characteristics are all to be observed here, the romantic glamour and drama of nature, the classic and Venetian influences, the French quality, and the faultiness of the figures when they are looked at in detail. His preoccupation with and mastery of landscape are shown by the compositional use of the tree in the center, which willy-nilly compels the spectator to join with the artist in giving attention primarily to the natural scene.

**Seapiece (L.).** This is the extreme of romantic lyricism. Only the painter's art saves it from being a postal card loaded with sentimental sweetness. It is sweet in itself, but the admirable use of plastic means avoids offensiveness. It marks a step further in the direction of the romanticism of the Nineteenth Century. Even the sky has been made dramatic and romantic by strong means, reminiscent of Tintoretto.

**Seaport at Sunset (L.).** In this Claude almost approaches Carpaccio: there are numerous architectural elements, but the feeling for landscape still holds the primacy over that for human figures. In other words, the figures function as elements of variety in the composition, which remains of the nature of landscape; thus the resemblance to Carpaccio is superficial. Here as elsewhere there is some similarity to the Seventeenth Century Dutch.

## POTTER

**La Prairie (L.).** This is an extremely good, though not a great picture. There is a vivid sense of air, of enveloping atmosphere. This is given by a combination of the Venetian glow with the Rembrandtesque glow, and, together with the highly effective space-composition, it makes the picture. The whole design is one of great simplicity, and the linear rhythm is chiefly constituted by the design in the cows and the clouds, with a balance between the two factors.

## CONSTABLE

**The Hay Wain (N.G.).** The first general effect is reminiscent of Hobbema in the dramatic character of the sky, though it is less stylistically dramatic, and in the solid, real character of the houses and trees. The reality is less in



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

the execution of detail than in the general feeling for what is presented, and the trees are less obviously dramatically posed to unify with the dramatic sky. This is the effect primarily of the picture when seen from a distance, but the resemblance to Hobbema is clear.

The composition is admirably though very unconventionally unified. The center of the canvas is taken up by the team in the water; the large mass made up of the house and tree at the left is balanced by the open landscape at the right of the canvas; color and light also function powerfully in tying this design together. The use of juxtaposed small spots of color is very much in evidence and shows the impressionists' debt to Constable. The tree is a static, placid compositional unit, with the sky a moving mass above. In the treatment of the team, the house, the trees, and the sky there are so many reminiscences of Rubens's "Landscape with Shepherd," that it is probable that Constable had studied that picture; however, all these reminiscences are so adapted to Constable's own form that there is no suggestion of plagiarism. This picture well illustrates the already mentioned merging of a relatively unimportant small figure, like that of the man in the wagon, into the general massive effect of the landscape by omission of detail and impressionistic rendering.

This picture exemplifies in the highest degree all Constable's personal characteristics as noted above. His use of color in designs growing continually smaller, but retaining their quality no matter how small they become, his feeling for the spirit of place, his adjustment of detailed representation to the compositional importance of the object depicted, his effective designs of light, and his rich, glowing surface-charm, are all present to the fullest extent.

**Flatford Mill (N.G.).** In this picture the rendering of landscape is less original than in the "Hay Wain," and the color is not so rich and juicy. Still, there is a general use of the method of color-division. There is more tendency to make a dramatic union between the large tree and the sky (in the drawing and movement) than in "The Hay Wain": the tree on the right side tends to repeat the voluminal movement of the clouds on the left. Much of the painting in the foreground is rather brittle and dry, though it is not completely destitute of color.

**Salisbury Cathedral (N.G.).** This picture shows so much manipulation of light that it might have been by Jongkind or Monet, if either had had Constable's feeling for rich, juicy color. Here the rendering of individual figures, including foliage, is simplified in an extreme degree. The whole background is a positive design, deliberately achieved with the use of light, in a sort of irregular series of spots and patterns of irregular shapes. This background-pattern is somewhat reminiscent of Bellini's "Sacred Conversation." The jewel-like color is again treated divisionistically.

## TURNER

**Calais Pier (N.G.).** This early Turner reveals his preoccupation with the tawdry, the dramatic, the narrative, rendered, however, in the terms of good

## TH. ROUSSEAU

painting which are always his. This is a cheap melodramatic episode which is worthless as a work of art: it contains nothing original in conception, composition, color, or method of rendering.

**Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus** (*N.G.*) In preoccupation with the tawdry and inessential this is practically a repetition of the "Calais Pier." The contrast between a stormy and a calm episode as compositional units of the picture is present, as so often in Turner's work: it is a mere cliché. His use of light and color are as banal as the conception which they express, which lies outside the realm of art altogether. The color is a surface-play: it has no real richness or depth, and serves but feebly to compose the picture.

**Dido Building Carthage** (*N.G.*). This is an imitation of Claude pure and simple. Turner's lack of intelligence is shown by the fact that he obviously tried to simplify Claude, that is, to get the richness, splendor, majesty, grandeur, mystery of landscape by omitting so many details that there is very little representative element in the picture. But in Claude, the representative element, while not accentuated, is always enough, and the effects after which Turner was striving are felt as an all-pervasive quality; in Turner, the means and technique are paramount, and the effect is nil.

## TH. ROUSSEAU

**Edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau Towards Brôle** (*L.*). This picture would have been impossible without Claude. It is clearly a landscape and not a figure-piece. It has Claude's glow, and a certain amount of his grandeur and majesty, though by no means so much. The deficiency is due to Rousseau's inability to portray the general feeling of landscape by the successful use of the painter's means, so combined that no one element jumps out. In this painting, the resort to obvious means is striking. Instead of a natural vista, which we always find in Claude with noticeable economy of means, we have an artificial vista, obtained by an arching of trees which practically amounts to a frame. That is on the way to meretriciousness. In Claude, when trees are used, their conception is well balanced, which makes them an integral part of the landscape, even if they are in the foreground and prominent. In this picture, while the paramount interest is carried by the above-mentioned specious means to the distant landscape, what feeling of mystery and grandeur there is in the landscape is confined to the glowing area. This, however, is nicely modulated with blue. Our interest in that slight and imperfectly rendered romantic distance is sharply competed for by the trees in the foreground, which are almost realistically painted. Compared with Claude's, Rousseau's means of portraying the glow tends towards a theatrical disbalance. In the Rousseau, the glow becomes something apart, instead of a pervasive element in the total effect, and the result is, when compared with Claude, an overaccentuation of one element, light. Even that is not Rousseau's own and the result is a lack of unity in the largest sense.

Nevertheless, the picture is pleasing. This is primarily because of its



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design, which is varied, nicely proportioned in the relation of the colors, with rather symmetrical distribution of masses, and good relations of planes. In this sense, the picture has both unity and variety. Compared with a Claude it is inferior because it lacks the larger unity referred to above. The obviousness of the means resorted to to form a design, the lack of real impressiveness, make us feel the landscape as something painted and not as something real, with a loss of the mystical quality which is so pronounced in Claude. There is a lack of reality in the conception and of both originality and honesty in the execution.

### MONET

**House Boat (B.F.) (No. 730).** In this painting, we find a simple design in which convincing reality is rendered by a legitimate use of plastic terms, and which gives an aesthetic effect regardless of subject-matter. Line, light, color, space, are all adapted with consummate skill to the special purpose in mind, which is that of giving pictorial expression to the placidity and tranquillity of a particular aspect of nature. In achieving his results Monet has drawn freely upon the technique which we see constantly in the best work of Velasquez, especially as simplified and modified by Manet. Light is used not only for modeling and giving due values to varied structures, but as a general illumination; in each of its uses, this light makes a pattern which in itself is a contribution to the total aesthetic effect. Simplification is carried almost to the extreme, but each object depicted is rendered sufficiently to give the essential feeling of everything represented. Adventitious, irrelevant detail has been swept away, and this very process of simplification in every object represented in the painting is done with such balance and judgment that the simplification in itself is one of the sources of aesthetic pleasure. It is frankly a picture of a part of nature bathed in sunlight; the sunlight is an essential part of the picture, but it is not an overaccentuation. We feel the sunlight no more than we feel the perspective, the spatial intervals between the objects, the particular colors employed, or any of the other plastic elements. In short, the painting unifies into a composite whole, which has a conviction just as real of its kind as that which we should find, in a very different style, in a rendering by Cézanne of the same subject.

**Portrait of M. Cogneret (B.F.) (No. 725).** In the portrait of M. Cogneret, which was painted in 1880, after the time Monet had perfected his method, we get an effect comparable to the best effects of portraiture by great artists. The technique here employed is still in general the application of bright and contrasting colors used in connection with light, both as a general illumination and for local accentuations of color. But along with the effect of sunlight there is the rendering of the essential character of the sitter in such powerful terms that we are conscious of the effect and scarcely notice the technique. When we examine the technique we see that it has been skillfully adapted to the modeling of a figure of three-dimensional solidity, standing in relief against a background that merges with the figure into an organic whole.

## RENOIR

Instead of small color spots we find long streaks in the coat and shirt which give a feeling of reality to the texture more convincing than a detailed painting would be. In the face, the color, light and line, are used with a swirl which recalls somewhat that of Rubens and is so successfully used that it gives the general effect of animation, power and strength to both the painting and the character of the sitter, but less so than one finds in a portrait by Cézanne. This portrait is interesting as showing what is perhaps the origin of the Van Gogh technique of painting in ribbonlike streaks.

**Madame Monet Embroidering (B.F.)** (No. 197). In the portrait of Madame Monet embroidering, we see the Monet technique in its most characteristic form, used successfully in achieving plastic unity of a high degree of excellence. In the woman's gown, the curtain, the two jardinières, the carpet, in fact every object in the canvas, there is a richness of color obtained by the juxtaposition of spots of pure color. It gives not merely the surface effects of stuffs, but rather the abstract quality of richness, which harmonizes well with the design, considered from the purely plastic standpoint. The design is a unity of the successful use of line and space and color in a firmly knit composition, which has existence as a positive plastic form and moves us aesthetically without regard to what is portrayed. The essential feature of the picture is a sun-lighted room in which are a woman and various objects all rendered in terms of color. It is essentially a *genre*-picture, and we feel the basic human values of the general *intime* effect more than we notice there the color or light in the form of a technique. Monet's form in this picture is that of the charm of an interior, and that charm is due to its rendering in a plastic form of considerable power.

## RENOIR

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENOIR'S TECHNIQUE

The early work of Renoir, before the characteristic impressionistic technique had developed, is in line with the great traditions of painting, but is already modified towards a positive personal expression. The development of his technique, as described herein, is based upon a study of the Renoirs in the Barnes Foundation Collection.

**Le Petit Déjeuner** (No. 45) (1871), shows the interior of a room with a man and a woman seated at a dining-table. The color is light, rich, juicy and is successfully used in organizing the canvas, though in a comparatively simple and conventional manner. There is no evidence of the impressionistic technique of juxtaposition of spots of color, but there is a modulation in the tones of the colors of the clothing and a decided tendency to the accentuation of light. There is a real but delicate solidity in the figures, achieved in the rather traditional Velasquez-Goya manner. It is somewhat suggestive of the best work of Goya and of Vermeer, but is free from the latter's preoccupation with the rendering of textiles. There is a more realistic human quality to everything depicted, and the design is very much more original



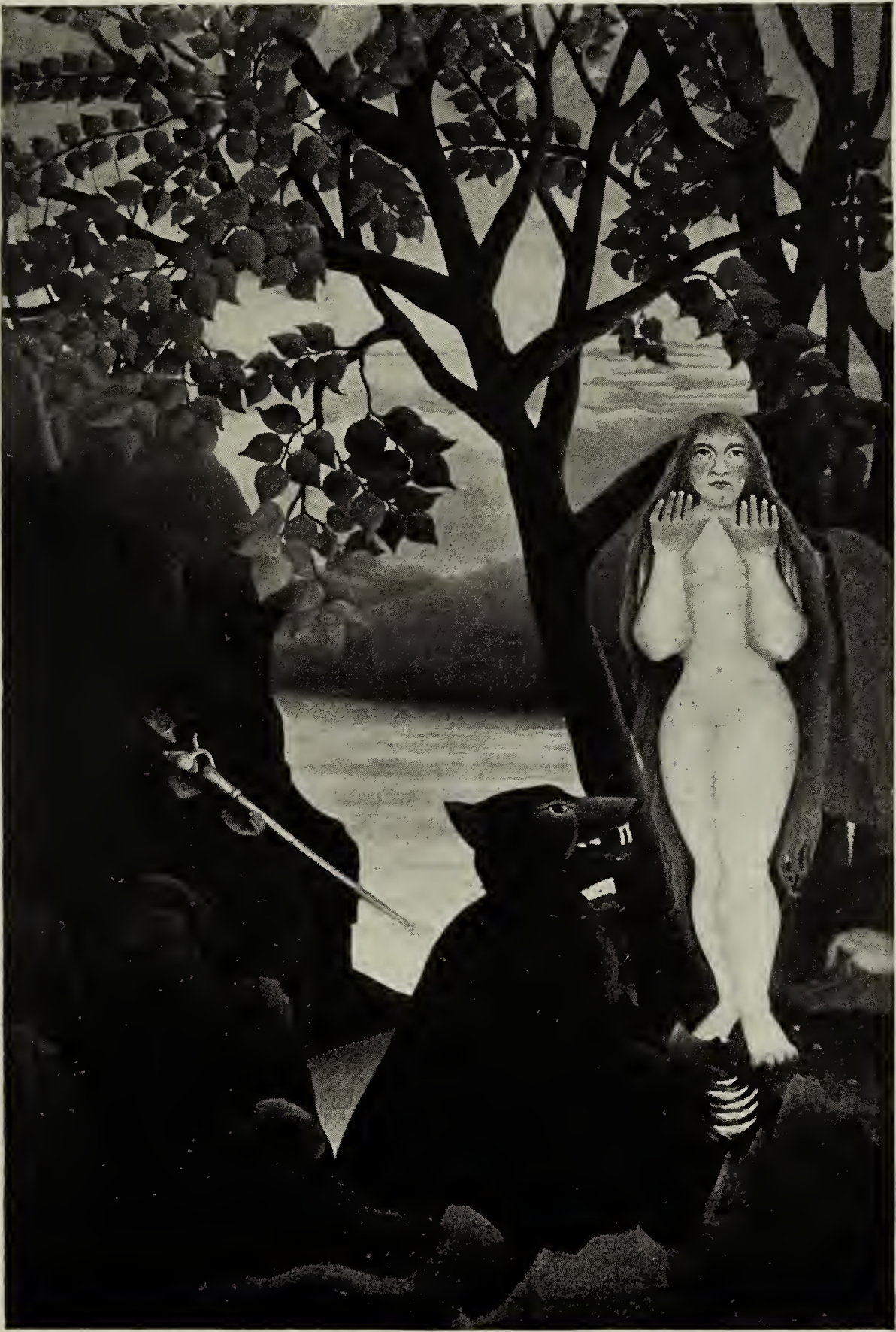
## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

and free from conventional arrangements than in Vermeer or the other Dutch *genre*-painters. It shows Renoir's fine grasp of the great Dutch-Spanish traditions as they were modified by Manet and endowed by Renoir himself with the feeling of lightness and delicacy characteristic of the Eighteenth Century French painters, notably Chardin. It is characteristic of Renoir's early work in the depiction of the events and scenes of everyday life. In all of these pictures there is a strong human appeal which is undoubtedly due to the illustrative element. But all the figures, objects and scenes which constitute the narrative are rendered in adequate plastic terms, used to achieve a general design, so that the story is entirely subsidiary. In other words, we see the picture as a plastic form instead of a narrative.

In the portrait of the **Girl with Her Hands Above Her Head** (No. 9) (1875), we see his early characteristics at their best. The general color is blue and silver, with no admixture of the reds which later he made the main color of his palette. The Velasquez-Goya tradition is even more delicatized and gains a particular quality by the use of Manet's method of broad painting. The modeling is done by means of light and shade, with no evidence of the ribbonlike brush-strokes which he used later. The shadows are only slightly dark and are rendered in blues which are in themselves lustrous and varied by subtle modulations by light. The Courbet tradition is evident, but Courbet's heaviness is supplanted by a delicacy and charm. The diaphanous, light stuffs are of extraordinary richness. In all his early work, he obtains striking effects by painting a light textile over a darker one, in such a way that both the underneath and the upper stuffs have a richness and lightness and delicacy. Even at this period, when Renoir's palette was comparatively limited, he shows the great mastery of color as the organizing factor in his design. The color is of varying degrees of contrast, in areas of differing sizes and shapes. The backgrounds are, as always with Renoir, made interesting in themselves by various means. They form patterns which are repeated in the lines defining contours, so that the design formed by the lines and color of the figure is duplicated in varying degrees of similarity and intensity in the background. The design of the picture is enriched by patterns in the background made up of linear and color elements, in which the lines run at varying angles from the body.

The picture of **Two Women Seated in a Garden** (No. 289) (1875), is another interesting instance of Renoir's enrichment of traditions by his personal touch. For instance, the Manet-like figure in the foreground has Renoir's fluidity of line, color and mass, in place of Manet's tendency to rigidity. The figure in the middleground is pure Renoir of the 1875 period. The part of the garden immediately behind the second figure is Manet's conception in Renoir's adaptation. The trees in the extreme background are rendered in the characteristic impressionistic technique but with scattered areas of intensified color which give to that background a depth and richness never present in Monet's work.

In the picture of the **Girl with the Jumping-Rope** (No. 137) (1875),



Rousseau (le Douanier:)

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Piero della Francesca

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Arezzo





Cézanne

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Manet

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the modeling of the hands and face gives a Velasquez-Goya-like effect achieved by means of light and color. Bluish shadows make a color-design with the pink of the cheeks, the red of the lips, the dark blue of the eyes, the brown of the hair, the coral of the necklace, and the white of the guimpe. The impressionistic technique, visible in the blue gown, is used with a broadness suggestive of Manet. The delicacy of the white stuffs over the blue, in which an added reality is achieved in the envelope of white and its underlying blue, gives a fine feeling of solidity, richness, and charming reality. The background is made interesting by variations of color and contrasts in both the top and bottom, and in the right and left, all achieved by modulations of color with light.

In **Femme au Crochêt** (No. 108) (1876), we see the same general tendency as in the "Girl with Her Hands Above Her Head," but with an increased effect of realism. The face and hands obtain a sense of extraordinary reality, delicacy and charm. The light extends from the hands up through the fichu to the face; it is then reduced in intensity through the front part of the hair, and culminates in a bright band of light constituting the comb. This design radiates to the right and to the left in an irregular way and forms a pleasing pattern. The modeling is still free from perceptible individual brush-strokes; but the juxtaposition of different colors by means of small brush-strokes is noticeable in the background, lending it a rather mottled appearance and tending towards the formation of lines and color-areas of contrasting directions and sizes, which merge harmoniously.

In the portrait of the **Woman with Her Elbow on a Piano** (No. 712) (1878), there is the same general blue and silver color-scheme, the same rendering of diaphanous stuffs in contrast with or overlying other and darker stuffs, but there is a decided change in the technique of the painting as a whole. This change consists in the use of the juxtaposed colors applied with perceptible small brush-strokes in all parts of the figure and background. These spots of color and brush-strokes are laid on in all possible directions, in varying degrees of length and breadth and of color-contrast, and form a background which is moving, rich, varied and unified. At a distance the general effect of the face and hands is of the rather flat modeling of Manet. The modeling in the face is executed by a series of small brush-strokes of colors ranging from white through various degrees of ivory and pink and blue; in other words, the impressionist technique has been adapted by Renoir to modeling. Color begins to become more varied, so that instead of the blue and ivory of the previous pictures, we see reds, yellows and browns, with admixtures of light to form a whole gamut of tones.

The **Pourville Landscape** (No. 6) (1878), shows still further technical developments. The same individual brush-strokes of contrasting or complementary colors are seen throughout the entire foreground and the middleground, by which an effect is obtained very similar to that of Monet's characteristic work of this period. The effect is very much delicatized and the



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color is of a finer sensuous quality, much richer and deeper. From the foreground extending backward toward the middleground, the obvious technical means taper off in the extent of their employment so that in the middleground they are supplanted by broad areas of color in which no brush-strokes are perceptible. The same freedom from brush-strokes is noted in the mountains in the background and in the sky. In other words, Renoir here modifies the impressionists' technique to his own ends and obtains richer and deeper effects than Monet ever achieved. The colors, chiefly various shades of red, blue and green, with a slight amount of yellow, have a surface richness expressed best by the words "creamy" and "velvety." It is of extraordinary richness and depth. At this period, Renoir employed the impressionist technique in painting most of his landscapes; but this is easily understood if we remember that that technique was very much in vogue in the seventies and eighties, and was especially adapted to securing greatly varied effects of the play of sun upon the various colors of natural objects.

The **Bougival Landscape** (No. 210) shows his characteristic technique as employed in the early eighties. The spots of broken color are juxtaposed with ribbon-like brush-strokes of varying degrees of size and width, to obtain different effects. Sometimes the brush-strokes are almost as broad as those of Manet, and always with color of Renoir's degree of richness and depth. The effect of this painting is obviously and frankly that of full sunlight upon multicolored objects in a summer landscape. While the effect is of extraordinary colorfulness, it lacks the creamy, velvety effect of the "Pourville" painting and is more like the typical surface effects which Monet and Sisley obtained in their paintings of that period.

In all of the landscapes of the early eighties, the impressionist technique is followed with rather close fidelity but with such varied subject-matter that the compositions take on infinite variety. That is, we get a great diversity of both compositional and color effects, in contrast to Monet's rather monotonous ones.

Renoir's freedom from slavish adherence to a technique or manner is shown by the fact that during the early eighties when he was painting landscapes with characteristic impressionistic technique, he produced a great number of figure-pieces in which the general effect is radically different from that of his landscapes of this period. Brilliant and varied colors which he had employed in his landscapes bathed with sun, are used here in even greater variety; there are also an infinite number of adaptations of that technique to obtain effects more suited to the realization of figures. In the painting **Madame Renoir and Baby** (No. 15) (1881), the technique varies greatly: modeling and the surface of the faces and hands are done in the Velasquez-Manet manner but with brighter colors; the rendering of textures in the baby's dress, and in the material of the bowl and jar, is done by juxtaposed colors in short strokes; the floor is painted in broad, almost monochrome effect. In these different objects the technique is varied

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and modified by the size of the color spots and the width and length of the brush-strokes. For instance, in the painting of the woman's gown, the colors are applied in a Manet-like manner, but there is a difference from Manet's technique in the use of a richer structural color and an admixture of light to give an effect of iridescence. In the bowl and the jar the color juxtapositions vary from medium-size brush-strokes, as in the bowl, to juxtapositions of colors arranged with a tendency towards the circular that gives them an effect of color-volumes or masses. In the background the impressionistic technique is seen only upon close inspection and the brush-strokes are slighter, so that the general effect when looked at from a distance is of a fairly uniform but mottled and rich color. Even in the floor, where the general effect is of broad color-masses, a near view shows an admixture of various tones somewhat in the impressionistic manner, resulting in great richness and variety with no tendency towards monotony. The general naturalistic quality of this picture is achieved, as above noted, by a successful union of the traditions of Velasquez, Manet and Monet, but all are so varied by Renoir's own treatment that the painting is a personal achievement of distinction and power. The subject-matter is trite, but the composition is so varied and all the plastic elements—line, light, color, mass, space—so skillfully handled that the triteness of the composition disappears before a wave of human values richly embodied in a strong and characteristic plastic form.

The two full-length portraits of a "Boy" and "Girl" (Nos. 325 and 189) (1883) show a number of important technical achievements attained in the main through Renoir's development of the impressionistic manner. Both of these pictures were portrait commissions, but instead of painting mere portraits Renoir conceived designs in which the sitter is only an element in a larger creation. The figure of the **Boy** extends the total length of the canvas and is placed in the foreground; the background is made up of landscape consisting of various small areas of water defined by rocky pieces of land. The line begins to approach the sharp character which it reached in his highly linear period of 1885, but is made slightly ragged by the flow of color over contour. Colors have become very brilliant, rich, deep and varied. The impressionistic color-technique is clearly evident throughout the canvas except in the face, where the modeling is of a rather uniform color-effect, obtained by means of light and color with shadows almost completely abolished. The boy's clothes are painted everywhere in juxtaposed colors, with brush-strokes visible only upon close inspection, so that at a distance there is a composite effect of blue running into various shades. The effect of textures is attained by the use of light in combination with the colors, so that the broad general effect of the textile is felt rather than its individual pattern. The foreground, which has a feeling of solidity, is painted in the impressionistic manner, with color in broader brush-strokes than Claude Monet generally used, and tempered with light. The ground is of a general dark color, broken up into various blues and reddish-browns



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in such a way as to suggest the contours of objects. These quasi-objects in the foreground form a rhythm with the objects around them, and there is a tendency for the objects to assume the character of volumes which move backward in space. In the middleground this use of the color depicts solid objects like rocks and clumps of grass, which diminish in size but are increased in number towards the background; the effect is a rhythm that moves from the bottom part of the foreground into the deep middleground. This rhythm is increased in value by the fact that on the left side the objects are greater in number and lighter in color than the fewer and darker objects on the right side. Towards the horizon there is a comparatively flat area painted in the impressionistic manner though with concealment of the brushstrokes. Against the sky there are cliffs which form a duplication of the rocks in the middleground, but with an increase in size. Above the cliffs there is an area of sky practically free from clouds. In other words, the rhythm starts at the very front of the foreground and extends all the way to the background; it is enhanced in variety by color, as above noted, and by an area of flat landscape at the horizon, where the voluminal rhythms are resumed. The background of the picture makes a charming composition in itself in which the cliffs function as a horizontal central mass, balanced in front by the blue of the sea and in the back by a blue of another quality which represents the sky. This picture shows Renoir's use of the impressionists' technique to attain volumes which move rhythmically in deep space; but the objects have not yet become sufficiently solid, nor his handling of space-composition sufficiently skillful, to make the volumes function as they do in the later landscapes.

In the companion picture a little **Girl** (No. 189) holding a parasol is standing in a landscape. The drawing and modeling in the figure are of the same linear character as in the "Boy" and the same general color-scheme is employed; but the background, which in the boy's picture was a landscape in which perspective gives the effect of real distance, here takes the form of a screen. There is more luster to the color, and it is so handled by contrasts, gradations and admixtures of light, that the character of the design is of a general iridescence that culminates in the interior of the parasol, a shimmering, animated unit of great power. The technique here is more impressionistic in its juxtaposition of colored spots and brushstrokes than it is in the companion picture, and the tendency to form voluminal masses is less noticeable.

In the middle eighties, Renoir worked for several years in a new and different manner. His line, which theretofore had been fluid and overflowing with color in the definition of contours, became sharply incisive, and the rich, juicy quality of his color was replaced with dryness and a tendency towards acidity. It has been customary for critics to describe this change as due to the influence of Ingres. In the painting **Woman Carrying a Baby** (No. 219) this sharply linear character and acidity of color are well represented. The line is incisive in outlining contours of objects, but with

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all its sharpness it has a quality quite different from Ingres's, both in itself and in its function in the canvas. In Ingres the line is used for the construction of linear patterns: it outlines the contours of objects, the colors of which are merely filled in between those lines. But in the work of Renoir at this period, the line functions only incidentally in the formation of linear patterns. Its chief function is in the achievement of new color-forms which take on a linear character in comparison with the fluid, rather ragged character of the line in his work before that period. In no part of this canvas or of the other paintings by Renoir of that time, do we find any decline in his ability to make color function as the structure of an object, or as the means of composing the picture. In the picture under discussion, the contours of the arm are sharply defined by incisive line, but if we consider that arm in its plastic rather than representative significance, we find that it is a color-volume with specific functions. It moves in space in a certain relationship with the woman's body below the arm, with the chest and the back and shoulders of the woman, and with the mass made by the body of the child. In other words, we have a series of color-volumes or masses which function in the picture as three-dimensional objects, and these interrelate themselves in space, and enter into the formation of a definite plastic unit. The same effect is noted in every object which is defined by the sharp line above mentioned. Nothing could be further removed from the linear form of Ingres than the plastic form revealed in this painting.

Here also, we find a technique representative of the best traditions of the past but always varied in Renoir's characteristic manner and in harmony with his particular purpose. For instance, in the modeling of the sharply linear faces, the effect at a distance is that of a choice but delicate three-dimensional solidity, which seems to be achieved by the usual method of light and shade. When we examine the faces at close quarters we see that the modeling is not that of Velasquez, Manet or Leonardo, but is achieved by an individual use of color and light; in the case of the woman, by a broad sweep of pink in the cheek and jaw with a contrast of white in the area including the region of the eye and forehead. The line of demarcation between the woman's nose and the background is achieved by means which are hardly discernible.

The paintings of this period, which have been so much criticized as a retrogression in color and drawing, really represent some of the best of his entire career. They show the influence which Italian frescoes had on Renoir and in addition there is a delicate, porcelain-like, cameo quality somewhat reminiscent of Boucher. The acid tendency of the color is more than offset by a luminous, pastel quality that endows it with an appeal and a charm of a high degree. This color is employed with Renoir's usual variation of technique. In the face and body the color is put on in rather broad areas with no tendency toward differentiation except by admixture of light, though this is sufficient to avoid monotony. In other parts of the canvas the impressionistic technique is modified by foreshadowings of the narrow ribbon-



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like strips which we shall see later to be the characteristic mark of Van Gogh.

The painting of **Argentueil** (No. 126) (1888) is almost typically impressionistic in technique, but with Renoir's characteristic adaptations. He is obviously interested in a design made up of horizontal lines of varying color, length, and breadth, with a sufficient number of lines meeting at right angles to achieve an interesting and unusual pattern. The painting organizes around a boat which is painted in brilliant scarlet, and the organization is a color-form in which the red, blue, ivory and green are harmoniously blended.

In the landscape **Mt. Saint Victoire** (No. 288) (1889), the general effect is that of atmosphere suffused with sunlight, with a mountain in the distance. There is a haze in the background made up of overtones of brilliant reds, greens and yellows. In the foreground is an olive grove containing a score or more of small trees, the tops of which are a series of circular masses. Plastically, these trees function as circular colored volumes moving in deep space; they form a series of rhythms beginning with the small trees in front, increasing in volume in the larger trees to the rear, so that between the foreground and the background, which is represented by the foothills and the mountains, the space is filled with a succession of moving volumes of color. Those rhythmic colors are duplicated by the more lightly represented clouds. The rhythm in the foreground makes a design which extends over that part of the picture, is broken up by a comparatively flat area in the middleground, is resumed by a series of larger rhythms made up of the foothills, and culminates in the rhythmic roll of the mountain. This mountain also is felt to be completely surrounded by space. The rhythm which embraces the volumes in the foreground is a heavy rhythm, broken up by the comparatively flat space in the middleground, as above mentioned; then the rhythm is resumed by the foothills, which are blurred in outline and more lightly rendered; this rhythm is continued by the mountain which is still more lightly rendered. The result is space-composition of a very high grade.

The whole picture is a rhythmic flow of color. We see the same effect in nature, but we never see it in such rich, deep, iridescent, scintillating, moving color. It may be looked upon as a landscape, but plastically it is more akin to the effects seen in the Renaissance painters who were primarily concerned with obtaining the effect of movement of rhythmic colored masses in deep space. Abstracted from all subject-matter the essential effect of the painting is akin to that in Titian's "Entombment." We feel the perspective as color, not as line. Although the effect is highly naturalistic it gets an increased degree of realism by reason of the artist's ability to select the significant and to construct something which is more moving than the original would be.

The movement of volumes in deep space is the main motive in the "Mt. Saint Victoire" landscape and the volumes are of considerable solidity and

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rather well defined. It is obvious that to be able to render those volumes with that degree of solidity and compositional value, Renoir had gone through a period of perfection of technique to that particular end. The development of those voluminal masses to that degree of solidity and moving spatial relations is shown in the **Landscape with Figures** (No. 240) (1888), representing a group of people under trees, and a lake with boats in the distance. The individual trees, as well as certain of their branches, form voluminal masses that move in and around each other in deep space, as in the "Mt. Saint Victoire" landscape. But here the volumes are less defined in their contour and are more floating, vaporous, of less solidity. Another element in the same motive is formed by a clump of trees in the middleground which functions as a larger volume of comparatively little solidity. All these volumes taken together move in a series of rhythms all over the canvas and are repeated by the voluminous masses of white clouds in a blue sky, which add the element of variety by means of contrast in color. The impressionistic technique, in its typical form, is used only in isolated parts of the canvas. In the masses formed by the leaves of the trees and by the clouds, the brush-strokes are noticeable only upon close inspection, so that the effect is that of comparatively solid uniform color. In these two paintings, "Mt. Saint Victoire" and the "Landscape with Figures," we see for the first time Renoir's adaptation of the technique to the portrayal of the grandeur and majesty that characterizes the work of Claude. There is present also the spirit of local place which Constable rendered, so that the composite effect of the landscape is the spirit of local place combined with much of the epic grandeur of Claude's work. This vastness Renoir attained in a high degree in a great variety of landscapes painted at the end of his career. In these landscapes we notice also the added quality of drama which Hobbema attained by the use of contrasting masses, particularly in the sky.

In the early nineties Renoir so varied the impressionistic method that he produced a series of different effects in which the technique is scarcely perceptible. In the **Nude Standing in the Water** (No. 301) (1892), the whole rendering is so etherealized and delicatized that it becomes sheer beauty, and the painting seems to have been breathed upon the canvas. Contours are defined by lines which retain some of the sharpness of the work of the middle eighties, but the line is merged with color that overflows the contours and takes away sharpness. The background takes the form of a screen rather than of distance, although perspective, rendered in terms of color, is clearly perceptible. The colors here are light and delicate blues, silver, and pinks. The great variety of contrasts and juxtapositions of subtle colors and a complete absence of evidence of technique, give an effect of great charm.

At this period Renoir was very much interested in the painting of quite young girls, and the same model appears in a whole series of paintings. There is never duplication of the effects in their entirety although there is the same general expression of youthful, feminine charm. In two separate **Heads** of this period (Nos. 299 and 302) the same effect of delicacy and real-



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ity is attained in an entirely different design. The color-forms in each are different and the impressionists' technique has been so toned down that it is perceptible only in isolated areas; the colors are applied in brush-strokes that are imperceptible in some cases and quite broad in others. In all of these the basic character of flesh is rendered, but by interpretation and not by literal imitation.

In the early nineties Renoir continued his efforts to make masses of color function as volumes moving in deep space, and he obtained a great variety of effects. For instance, in the **Nude Seated on a Bench** (No. 274), the background is broken up by subtle gradations of line and color into a series of volumes which are placed in definite space-relations with the objects in front and back of them. This design is duplicated by vague trees and color-spots, which have apparently no representative value, and are very much less solid. The rhythm starts from immediately back of the nude and is continued with diminishing intensity until the distance fades off into infinity by virtue of light, delicate color. This painting shows also the appearance in Renoir of the marked distortions which he used so much in most of his later works. The nude's foot is out of all proportion to the graceful well-formed figure, and the arms seem to be almost as long as the legs. During the nineties, this distortion was gradually increased until in the late nineties faces and other parts of the body, viewed as representation, became positive disfigurements.

In the **Girl Seated Under a Tree** (No. 255), the features in the face are scarcely distinguishable: the right arm looks like a vague mass of color and light with little resemblance to an arm, and the left arm is so broken in continuity that only part of it seems like a solid object. Yet that figure functions as a plastic unit with overwhelming power, and takes its place in relation to other masses represented by a tree and two gateposts. These objects move rhythmically in deep space, along with the volumes formed by trees. Here the impressionistic technique is employed in infinite variety, with the light so predominating as to form a very rich and bizarre pattern of particular animation, which adds much to the total aesthetic effect.

In the picture of the **Woman and Child Seated Under a Tree** (No. 257), in front of an olive grove with sea and hills in the distance, Renoir's color has reached such a degree of varied and intensified richness that it effects a harmony comparable to the richest musical symphony. We note the same movement of volumes in deep space, attained by the trees depicted in the impressionistic manner, and all the elements—color, line, mass, space—are deliberately bent to design. Viewed at a distance the representation is sufficient to give a sense of reality in the figures, but viewed at close quarters these figures are seen to be color-spots with no attempt at rendering of details. This probably is the most important painting achieved by Renoir up to this date and shows the realization of plastic values of such infinite variety and great power that he is now to be placed in a class with Giorgione in point of monumental plastic effects.

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From 1900 on Renoir's mastery of his medium was complete and he used it in the depiction, in solid plastic form, of the human values intrinsic to the various events of life. These events are rendered, never literally, but imaginatively, and in them color attains to heights never achieved by any other painter.

In **The Embroiderers** (No. 239) (1900), one of whom is seated at a table, the work of the seventies, eighties and nineties culminates in the achievement of new forms. The figure at the right realizes all the fine textural effects and solidity found in his work of the seventies, but is made more colorful and more varied by a more skillful use of technique. In the seated girl embroidering, there is the delicacy and charm of the period of the early nineties, but it is increased in solidity by the structural use of color. In the girl standing at the back there is a tendency towards deformation and blurring of outline seen in the work of the late nineties. The impressionistic technique here is still in evidence in various stages of perceptible brushwork and size of color-spots. In the girl seated at the table, the strokes are broad and fairly regular in one place in the gown over the chest, while in the part of the gown which extends from that point up to the neck the juxtaposition of colors is done in strokes which take many different directions and make a pattern in contrast with the vertical strokes of the first part of the gown mentioned. In the gown of the woman seated at the right, the color is applied in even broader strokes than Manet's, and in the sleeve it gives an effect not unlike Tintoretto's. In the figure standing at the back, the juxtaposed colors are done with a swirl, in a circular and broad manner that adapts them very successfully to the achieving of three-dimensional solidity and circumambient space.

This picture shows, in the faces of the two figures to the left, the deep red which Renoir later used to achieve a new color-form quite his own. The result is a real structural solidity, superior to anything ever achieved by Rubens.

In the **Seated Nude** (No. 217) (1910), Renoir has taken a long step towards the use of his deep red in the form used so successfully and in many variations in all his later work. Here the figure has a monumental solidity through a representation of flesh which has no resemblance to real flesh in color, but has a greater feeling of reality than flesh itself ever has. The modeling is done with light and color, and achieves a smoothness approaching the effect of a Titian or Giorgione, but with a colossal solidity that is a positive distortion. The shadows are brown rather than blue as in his early work, so that the modeling approaches more nearly that of the old masters. Here his interest was, as always, preëminently that of design. In this case the design is formed by the deep red of the figure against a background generally green, rendered with almost typical impressionistic technique, but made very animated and interesting by a great variety of modulations and subtle color-contrasts.

**Nude Seated Near a Tree** (No. 284) (1912), the color is somewhat



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intensified, and the density and voluptuousness of the figure are less conspicuous, by reason of its entering into a more complex design. The modeling and the landscape are treated in the same manner as in the 1910 "Nude" (No. 217), but with an added note of indefinite, vaguely felt perspective going off into infinity. This perspective is rendered in terms of pure color, rather than with lines. Here the impressionistic technique is varied from its characteristic manner in some parts of the landscape, and is employed in rendering distance by contrasts of color so subtle that the means are scarcely perceptible.

Concerning the nudes of this class, the uninformed public expresses its displeasure by saying that the nudes look like pieces of raw beef. The mistake consists in interpreting them as representative, instead of as plastic, forms.

In all this late work Renoir approaches nearer to the Venetians in the use of color. There is a circumambient glow of great richness that pervades the whole canvas. He is gradually approaching the fundamental grace and charm of the ancient Greek statues, but he is doing it with a new use of color, which adds a more realistic tendency to the classic influence than in the work of any previous painter.

Beginning with the work of the nineties, Renoir showed an increasing interest in the value of distortions and departure from naturalistic color in the achievement of a richer and more moving design. He had not lost the ability to achieve the results which were characteristic of each of his earlier pictures, namely, lustrous, rich, delicate textural effects, feeling for character in faces, terse expressive line to portray movement, feeling for spirit of place in interiors, appreciation of the grandeur and majesty of landscape. All of these characteristics which form, more or less, the distinctive marks of his previous periods, went into solution in his later work and became less conspicuous. At all stages of his career he employed the Rubens tradition as it came through the Eighteenth Century painters, notably Fragonard. Throughout his entire work we see the Rubens use of color, line and light to produce a swirl which in the hands of Renoir was modified by the impressionist technique and adapted to new monumental effects. For instance, this swirl as it emerged modified by Renoir, assumed the character of a three-dimensional mass which he adapted to the foliage of trees and other objects, to give the effect of movement in deep space.

In the *Bathers*<sup>1</sup> (No. 709) (1916), Renoir's technique has become perfected so that this painting may be said to represent the consummation of his power. He has become a colorist of the first rank in the largest and best sense of that term: he makes use of color to tie the various compositional elements together and form a picture which is organically whole. Color is used successfully for every conceivable purpose, so that new results are achieved. The figures have three-dimensional solidity, and, while far

<sup>1</sup> More detailed analysis of the "Bathers" follows this "Development of Renoir's Technique."

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from literally representative of natural objects, are sufficiently representative to make them of human interest. In other words, they are not human beings but creations attained by the use of color, line and light with distortions in every possible degree of departure from the normal. Perspective is rendered in terms of color; solid, colored objects, figures, trees, etc., move in a space which is itself colored, and that color in both elements gives a new richness to the spatial intervals. This is space-composition of the highest grade. The figures have achieved a form and strength reminiscent of the ancient Greeks, but they are richer in originality, in departure from the conventional. Composition in its general sense has attained the heights represented by Giotto in both the Assisi and Padua frescoes. From any object in the composition, the eye can move in any direction from that point and find units which relate themselves rhythmically. Composition has become a series of rhythmic units moving in deep space; each of these units is resolvable into line, color, mass and space, which constitute rhythmic designs in themselves. These rhythmic designs enter into relations with each other to constitute plastic form of the highest order. This painting has a richness and depth of color which suffers nothing in comparison with the best work of the great Venetians. It represents supreme artistry in the use of all the plastic means. These means were used in a manner which constituted a departure from the traditions so that a new and original plastic form, which is distinctively Renoir's, is created. This painting is the proof of the absurdity of the statement that Renoir represents a consummation in the adaptation of the traditions of the past, rather than an original force in painting. In point of fact, his originality exceeds greatly that of Cézanne. The reason why this originality is not evident is that his means are so subtly employed that their significance is appreciated only when one has studied the whole tradition of painting. Cézanne, too, undoubtedly had great originality, but his is obvious and Renoir's is subtle.

**Bathers** (No. 709). The figures are reminiscent of the Greek statues of about 400 B.C. The classic influence was taken as a motive for the elaboration of a symphony in plastic form, in which color is a very powerful factor. We are reminded also of Rubens, but again with something added that gives an increased appeal. In the same way do we feel the contribution of both Boucher and Fragonard, but it is greatly increased in power. The classic influence, as one finds it in the Greek vases of the best period, is seen in the fine linear quality both in the isolated figures and in the grouping of figures. The Greek line has lost its sharp, incisive character and has attained a new quality of strength. It is more broken, more varied in length, less continuously flowing than in the Greeks. The increased strength in the drawing is due to the union of line and powerfully moving color, with consequent freedom from linear sharpness.

The influence of Rubens is notable in the voluptuousness of the figures and in the use of a swirl made up of line, color and light. It differs from Rubens in the use of light, in a reduction in the intensity of



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the movement and drama, and in a new and more appealing quality in the color.

The influence of Boucher is apparent in the enamel or porcelain-like quality of the surfaces, which are made stronger in Renoir by more powerful drawing, into which enters a deeper and richer color.

The influence of Fragonard is apparent in the general feeling of airy, light gracefulness, which is increased in strength by richer colors of great structural solidity and of more pervasive effect in composing the picture.

In short, Renoir has taken the forms of the above predecessors and so modified each one of the plastic constituents that a new form has arisen which is richer, more powerful, more convincing of reality. All of those predecessors derive from the great Venetians, notably Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto; in power Renoir has approached nearest to the original sources. In this picture the most noticeable general influence is, in several respects, that of Giorgione. The general effect is that of the Arcadian, elysian feeling noted in the "Concert Champêtre": here, however, it is more free from the influence of classic myth and tied more to reality as we know it. There is a more this-worldly character in the figures, a lesser idealization of landscape, trees, the conventional classic quality. There is also reminiscence of Giorgione in the very powerful effect of color in unifying, composing, tying together the various units into an organic, plastic whole. The Venetian glow is supplanted here by a richer pervasive color, of greater appeal, which is used in combination with light and line to produce swirling masses or volumes that give a more dramatic character to the painting. This painting shows that Renoir's forms are of volumes moving in deep space. It is true that Renoir is rich in the production of linear rhythms, but those rhythms function inseparably with the rhythms of volumes; in other words, line, color and light are blended into the formation of volumes which are related to one another in an orderly manner in deep space. This painting is far removed from literal representation of subject-matter. The faces are represented in a very broad manner: the features are only indicated by broad notes of light, color or line which do not represent details but give instead the effect of solid underlying structural form. These objects are recognized as forms or figures, but with no literal likeness. We note the tendency towards distortion which has figured so largely in the moderns, who derived it chiefly from El Greco. This distortion would be grotesque or monstrous, if we attempted to interpret it by any standards of literal likeness. For instance, in the two standing figures at the right of the canvas, the arm of the nude seems to be twice as long as the leg, and from the shoulder to the end of the hand has no likeness to a natural human arm. That arm flows into and becomes continuous with the arm of the clothed figure, and the two together form a mass in which the separation between the two elements can be recognized only by the closest scrutiny. The nude's right arm and the clothed figure's left arm form one line in which the contours are recognizable; the nude's left arm and the clothed figure's

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right arm make a mass which looks exactly like the neighboring tree trunk, in which no distinct features can be discerned. The obvious purpose of these anatomical liberties is to achieve a design made up of the masses of those two figures, and this design is a unit in the larger design made up of the neighboring trees and landscape. The standing nude to the left is a more literal reproduction, but it too has distortions, especially in the left hip, which make it look like no normal human figure, and yet make it function powerfully in its plastic relations. In all of these figures there is an ease, a graceful fluid charm which is comparable to that of Poussin. That fluidity is part of the general rhythmic flow, which extends from one mass to the other and ties up the various units into a harmonious ensemble. This rhythm is more of color than of line, but is just as much a rhythm of volumes. The abstract feeling rendered by these rhythms is that of grace, delicacy and charm. Renoir has here attained to supreme heights in the use of color, superior to Delacroix's and Rubens's and comparable to that of Giorgione and Titian.

The number of color-forms in this picture is literally innumerable; from one end of the canvas to the other they vibrate, scintillate, dance, move, in relations with each other; they are not surface decorations but are solid forms of perceptible three-dimensional quality. Any one of these forms when abstracted is seen to be an independent entity and not a mere duplication of another color-form. The forms are series of color-chords which are richer, more varied, and more solidly real than those used by any other painter, not excepting the great Venetians. The color is used in quite an individual way both structurally and in organizing the canvas. There is a larger mixture of light than in any of his predecessors, and it is matched with an equally strong structural and organic use of color. The light forms a design in itself, which constitutes an important factor in the total aesthetic effect of the painting. This use of light is especially noticeable in the modeling, which gives a firm three-dimensional quality as real and convincing in its setting as the more solid three-dimensional modeling of Cézanne's figures. The modeling also forms a pattern made up of line, light, color. This constitutes decoration of the highest quality: the decoration is merged firmly with color used structurally so that the unit is both decorative and structural and constitutes form in its richest estate. Designs of light are found in every part of the canvas: they reinforce both line and color everywhere, in the flesh, in the gowns, in the trees, in the bushes, the sky; they are never of equal intensity or solidity, but graduate from their strongly structural value in the main figures in the foreground, become less in intensity in the middleground, and diminish to lightness in the background and in the sky. In all degrees of intensity they have a reality and a fitness to the particular use to which they are put.

*Line:* In the nude at the left, which at a distance seems to be sharply outlined in its contours, the line is never continuous or isolated when looked at at close range. Color overflows the contours, yet there is never any question of definition between the various objects thus separated from each other.



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The drawing is done by color more than by line: color and line are merged with light to give a form of drawing which is Renoir's own and which is more expressive and more aesthetically moving than the sharp line of Raphael or Ingres. Shadows as shadows are practically abolished and their equivalent given by contrasting colors.

*Perspective:* Literal reproduction of perspective as we see it in nature does not exist in this picture, yet the center of the canvas gives the effect of great distance. We are not conscious of that distance as such, and we are never quite sure where the horizon and the sky meet. But each object is represented upon a plane of its own, and these planes are infinite in number between the foreground and the background. There is no line which may be said to be used directly in the production of the illusion of perspective. Perspective, in short, is so rendered in terms of color that we do not feel it as perspective.

*Composition:* There is no tendency in this picture to the usual central mass and bilateral symmetry. The composition is fluid: it may be taken up at any point and carried around in a circular or elliptical manner, such as to relate all the figures and objects in a continuous, rhythmic, organic whole. Any figure selected at random is duplicated symmetrically in a corresponding position in another part of the canvas. For instance, if we select the standing figure at the extreme right, symmetry is satisfied by either the large standing nude on the left or by the nude whose arms join those of the clothed figure. If the left standing nude is selected, its corresponding duplicate is found in either the nude on the right or the clothed standing figure on the right, or the two taken as a unit. If we wish to select a central figure we may choose either of the two small indistinct nudes in the middle background, and find correspondingly balanced figures or subjects among the various elements to the right or to the left. Another series of compositional relations is that made up by the three figures on the right, the standing nude on the left, close to the reclining nude at her feet, and two nudes near the center of the picture; these stand in fine balanced rhythmic relations with each other, with differences in detail that constitute rich variety. Figures in any part of the canvas may be considered as masses, and they form rhythmic compositions in which they are related to masses made up of the trees or bushes. This great variety of compositional selections shows Renoir's extraordinary versatility, his infinite resources in making use of the compositional possibilities. In the composition alone it is a question whether Giorgione ever showed equal resources in point of variety and ability to effect compositional unity by the effective use of plastic means. The painting as a whole is of overwhelming richness, and the richness is not only of color but of all the plastic elements—line, space, light, mass, composition. The richness is not on the surface even though the surface is of extreme richness; it is all embracing and all pervasive, and is effected by the successful use of color, the most potent and at the same time the most difficult of all the plastic means.

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#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF CÉZANNE'S TECHNIQUE<sup>1</sup>

The earliest work of Cézanne was so strongly influenced by Courbet and Delacroix that it is not to be considered seriously as representative of his plastic form, except that even at that early date he showed particular ability to endow with great strength anything he painted. His early paintings done under the influence of Delacroix are highly romantic. Those done under the influence of Courbet are given quite a naïve feeling by Cézanne's use of distortions and by his inadequate and groping use of the plastic means. In all of this early work, the painting is heavy and thick, but the color has the force and strength which it has always had. His early impressionistic works are as characteristic of that technique as are the paintings of Monet, Pissarro and Sisley, but with important modifications which give them a distinctive feeling and strength of their own.

The most powerful and lasting influence upon Cézanne was that exercised by Pissarro, with whom he associated to some extent in his early years. From Pissarro he took over the impressionists' technique in all its phases—bright color applied in juxtaposed spots, visible brush-strokes, and the direct effects of sunlight upon objects. His work at this period has a close resemblance to that of Pissarro in the use of all the pictorial means, but it has much greater plastic strength. This technique was modified in all its aspects to such an extent that in his later work it is to be recognized only in solution, and is merged with the other influences, notably those of Michel Angelo and El Greco.

Cézanne learned from Pissarro the effect of color in organizing the composition; in addition he followed Pissarro's drawing, which is especially strong by reason of the fusion of light, line and color, all used in a broad and loose manner.

**The Estaque Landscape** (No. 208) is a typical impressionist picture. The color, in its variety, sensuous appeal and manner of use, is almost a duplicate of Pissarro's. His drawing is of the same rugged character and there is the same application of the closely juxtaposed colors applied in small irregular rectangular spots with the brush-strokes making the lines of demarcation between the spots. Viewed at a distance these areas give the effect of one color, as they do in Monet's best work; but to these spots there is an added depth and richness and an effect more definitely contributory to the actual structure of objects than we find in Monet; they are akin to the smaller effects in Pissarro, except that in the case of Cézanne there is a greater degree of solidity communicated to the objects depicted. Direct sunlight is used both as a general illumination and in spots focused on juxtaposed color-areas, so that the total effect of the light is impressionistic. This painting compared with Pissarro's "Garden with Houses" (No. 324) shows the iden-

<sup>1</sup> All the Cézannes upon which these notes are based are in the collection of the Barnes Foundation.



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tity of the technique, the somewhat greater solidity of Cézanne's objects, and his groping efforts towards Pissarro's skillful use of paint.

The next noticeable progress of Cézanne towards a more personal achievement is revealed in the **Provençal Landscape** (No. 300), representing mountains in the distance and a curiously placed diagonal road in the foreground. The general color-effect is similar to that of the Pissarro but with tremendous strides toward the realization of Cézanne's characteristic form. Here we note the same individual brush-strokes of small juxtaposed colors, but there is less tendency to modify those small spots of color with contrasting colors. We see also broad areas of uniform color depicting larger spaces than any in the previous work of Cézanne or the impressionists. In both the small and the large areas of color, the color is modulated and interspersed with light so that the technique in both aspects is definitely impressionistic. This painting shows the tendency, which Cézanne developed later, to render a crystal-clear atmosphere with such a skillful use of general illumination that it has led critics to make the erroneous statement that Cézanne did not paint direct sunlight. This atmosphere is occupied by various objects which are completely surrounded by space, and the result is space-composition of a high order.

Both color and drawing, while still basically those of Pissarro, are here used to produce more powerful effects than those in the work of any pure impressionist. The color is deeper, more glowing and more integrally a part of the structure of objects; it is more firmly knit into various units that make up different parts of the canvas; and it has attained a uniformly strong and rhythmic flow that binds all parts of the canvas together into a powerful general design. For instance, in the background to the right there is a succession of yellow rhythms alternating with green rhythms which vary from the horizontal to the angular and curvilinear. They start in the middle distance with a comparatively broad area of yellow and meet a small but very narrow green rhythm; they are continued by a rhythm made up of an admixture of green and yellow, followed by a deeper irregular green area with an island of yellow in the middle; then another admixture of green and yellow enters, and so on up to the lower mountain on the right side of the canvas. The general tendency of these rhythms on the right side of the canvas is horizontal; on the left, the rhythms consist of a series of alternating green and yellow narrow bands which radiate from the center, somewhat like the spokes of a wheel, for some distance, and then become generally horizontal. The area between the volumes on each side constitutes a central rhythm, contrasting in shape and direction with both the left and the right sides, and binding the two parts of the canvas together in a perfect whole. These rhythms, reinforced by subsidiary rhythms formed by the variously distributed houses and trees of fine three-dimensional solidity, give an unusually dynamic character to that part of the landscape.

The general design owes its particular quality to the contrast of this highly varied and rhythmic naturalistic landscape with a foreground which

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is a solid mass of general monochrome green, divided by a yellow road which extends from the center of the foreground diagonally to the right and meets the middleground almost at the edge of the canvas. The rich, deep green of this landscape is made more interesting by interspersions of light, making a mottled general effect with several accentuations of broad lighter green areas of irregular shape.

This painting shows Cézanne's ability to grasp the effects which make natural landscape moving and to increase those effects by rhythmic use of color, mass, light and line. The aesthetic power is enhanced by means of a design that consists of a contrast between an area which, both in color and its simple manner of treatment, is totally different from the infinite variety of the background. Sunlight floods the picture and is focussed on many points, so that it produces an appealing and varied subsidiary design. We do not feel the light especially as sunlight, because it is blended and adapted to new and special ends. Nevertheless, the picture is impressionistic: all its parts are realized by means of the impressionistic technique, infinitely varied and adapted to particular purposes.

In the best work of Cézanne in his late period, we feel the mastery in the use of paint to render plastic values of significance and deep power. It is only by studying his earlier work that we realize what a constant struggle it was for him to attain that degree of skill. The actual painting in the late work is thin, but is more adequate to its purpose. In much of the work of his early and middle periods the paint is of varying degrees of thickness—sometimes as thick as Van Gogh's. This thick paint does give the effect of solidity, but the means are more sculptural than pictorial. In the **Still-Life** (No. 190), representing a table with plate and fruit against a background of flowered drapery and a large plant, the rim of the plate is represented by a line of heavy paint which extends above the surface of the table. The modulation in the spots of color by which the peaches and the pear are rendered solid is also done with thick paint.

In the **Still-Life** (No. 329) with a table upon which is a skull, the paint is much less thick than in the previously mentioned still-life. In all these thickly painted pictures, the total effect is that of heaviness; this is increased by the thick lines defining the contours of objects. The "Still-Life" (No. 190), first mentioned, compared with the portrait "Femme au Chapeau Vert" (No. 141), shows the heavy general quality of the still-life. In both of the still-lives (Nos. 190 and 329), we see upon close inspection the impressionistic use of light and juxtaposed colors and brushwork, though modified and adapted to special ends. For instance, in the peaches, contrasting colors are applied side by side in brush-strokes varying from a short touch to a swirl of considerable size. In each case the point nearest the eye is a high-light, and all the other parts of the objects, except those quite remote, are tinged with lights of varying degrees of intensity.

The difference between the heavy painting and the light painting is easily perceived by touch. If the hand is passed over the portrait, the surface is



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found to be free from projections of pigment, while in the still-life with peaches and pears the projecting areas of paint are felt in many places.

In the larger **Still-Life** (No. 23), the painting is rather thick in some places and absolutely smooth in others. This picture, therefore, represents a further stage in Cézanne's progress toward a fully pictorial, non-sculptural technique. All the fruits are much larger than their prototypes in nature: they are not copies but elements in design. Here, as always in Cézanne, the prime element in design is the use of color in both its structural and its compositional rôle. The technique has departed so far from that of impressionism that the total effect is different; but each painted area, when examined at close quarters, shows the divided color applied in brush-strokes. Sometimes these are obvious, sometimes they are so merged in broad areas, modeled by means of light, as to be scarcely distinguishable. The volumes are more firmly placed in deep space than in the previous picture, so that it is fair to infer that with his progress in the use of his technique his command of space-composition became greater. In the **Still-Life** (No. 711) (see detailed analysis, page 491), all effect due to the impasto itself has disappeared and the actual coat of paint is very thin. The hard outlines of objects have been replaced by ragged lines of which color is the principal constituent. Consequently the effect is that of extreme lightness and delicacy, of solid three-dimensional qualities in the objects, and of great general strength and power. This represents the perfection of his method.

The great contrast between the technique of Cézanne's early work and that of his perfected period is shown by a comparison of the two groups of nudes, painted respectively in the early and late periods.

In the one representing **Five Nudes** (No. 93), with a central standing figure, the painting of all objects is quite thick, and in some points, noticeably in the hair and in the leaves of the trees, it reaches the impasto effects of the early impressionists. Here the line defining contours is more accentuated, is perceptibly thick, and is less merged with the color. There is convincing three-dimensional solidity and effect of reality in the figures, but the general effect of the picture is that of the heaviness which comes with the use of thick paint. Also, the design, while strong and finely realized, tends toward the conventional central mass with balancing figures to right and left. The impressionists' technique is here used in almost the manner of Monet, with small spots of color and obvious brushwork, yet even here it is tempered with modifications in various parts of the canvas which show Cézanne's ability to use means to his own ends.

In the group of **Men Bathers** (No. 101), the impasto quality of the paint has completely gone, the figures have even greater solidity than in the early work, the color is more luminous and firmer structurally, and the general effect is that of lightness. This painting represents Cézanne's work at the height of his power. The technique is clearly impressionistic in some areas; in others the means are visible only upon close inspection, and are so fundamentally modified in all their constituents that the general effect from

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a distance has no resemblance to the impressionistic. Cézanne has here progressed toward the ideal of composition, which consists in abolishing conventional standards of symmetrical balance: he has achieved a composition which organizes rhythmically from any point of the canvas selected. His command over space is greatly increased, so that the spatial intervals are a series of harmonious rhythms, and the effect of infinity in the background is attained by means that baffle analysis.

Cézanne's work can be appreciated best by banishing from the mind all idea of representation and confining attention to his primary purpose, which was to establish a series of relationships between objects in space, that make up a unified plastic design. His genius for producing moving designs of an unusual character is comparable to that of the best men, not excepting Giotto. This feeling for the dynamic relationships between objects, and the ability to coördinate the resulting forms into a design, was apparently innate in Cézanne, for we see it even when, in his earliest work, his use of the plastic means was halting and inadequate. The method by which he achieved his design was that of distortion, not only in faces and other parts of the human body, but in his use of all the plastic means, including line, space, mass. The distortions are fundamental, that is, they concern the planes themselves, so that these are changed in all conceivable directions away from the normal. The interpenetration of these distorted planes builds up radically new forms. In all of his work there is a perceptible, definite idea, which he himself called the *motif*. Naturalistic subject-matter was sacrificed to the desire to make lines, perspective and space fuse in planes of color, so that all the elements come into equilibrium. Objects, deprived of their semblance to real things, were merely the means used to fuse plastic elements into new forms.

Cézanne drew freely upon the great traditions of painting. From Velasquez and Manet he learned the simplification in detail of natural objects, by which they are rendered in the terms of the particular qualities of objects that move us emotionally and that make them what they are. From Michel Angelo he learned to use muscular accentuations, which he treated in terms of color and line that form appealing designs in themselves. From El Greco he took over the method of distorting various parts of the human body, and he made the parts so distorted function more actively as components in the design. All of these influences are clearly perceptible in the two groups of nudes above referred to. His merging of these methods was extremely skillful, even in the early work in which he had not yet learned control of the plastic means.

His nudes have a three-dimensional solidity and muscular design comparable to the best effects of Michel Angelo, but with the greater simplification which came through the application of the Manet tradition, and a more original design achieved by means of the distortions practiced by El Greco. It is Cézanne's distortions that determine his unique effects, and, as just noted, these distortions are perceptible in the use of all of the plastic



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means. For example, in the **Still-Life** (No. 94), representing a table containing fruit, jug, folded napkin, with a curtain hanging to the left, there is a plate of fruit in the middleground to the right which is placed in a position above and not upon the table. On the extreme edge of the table there is a pear which hangs partly over the edge, defying the law of gravity. In the extreme left fold of the napkin there is a peach hanging over the edge of the table without any support. The evidence of distortion in perspective is seen in the lines of the left side of the table running at an angle different from that of the corresponding line on the right side. In the **Still-Life** (No. 711), the front of the table at the right extends in a horizontal direction for a short distance and is then interrupted by an overhanging napkin, so that the continuity of the front line of the table is obscured. The horizontal line representing the continuation of the table is resumed very much higher up than on the right side. In the **Still-Life** (No. 23), the distortion is revealed in the excess in size of some of the pieces of fruit. Also, the left side of the table, extending from the front toward the back, is represented by a line again broken in its continuity and thrown out of its normal position by means of the fold in the napkin. In the portrait **Madame Cézanne** (No. 710), distortions of color, line and space are noticeable in every part of the canvas. Color is distorted away from its naturalistic representation of objects or shadows. The purpose of this distortion is clearly seen by the way in which each color relates itself to a neighboring color thus making a distinct color-form. In the portrait **Femme au Chapeau Vert** (No. 141), the details in the features have such individual distortions that the face is twisted and puckered out of all resemblance to a normal face. The hands are distorted by means of sudden breaks in the line, resulting in projections which look like unnatural excrescences. The left arm of the chair is foreshortened and made very much smaller than the right side of the chair, with the result that the chair itself is as much deformed as the woman's face and hands. In the portrait of **Man Standing in Room** (No. 209), it would be impossible to say where the junction of the back wall and the floor of the room is located. Lines of door and wall have a degree of obliqueness that never would exist naturally. The man's face is distorted both in the drawing of the features and in the use of unnatural colors. In **Still-Life** (No. 286), the plate of fruit is above the table and appears suspended in air without support. The drawing of the table is unnatural in every respect. The horizontal planes are so distorted from their normal position that one part of the table seems flat, another part hollow, and still other parts are raised above the level. In other words, the table is a series of waves, and it has the feeling of a landscape which gradually rolls from a flat surface towards a decided hill in the background. The oblique lines which represent the sides of the table and extend from the front to the back, differ in direction on each side, so that there is none of the normal tendency which lines continuing perspective have to meet in infinite distance. In the **Still-Life** (No. 190), the top of the table is hollowed. The outline of the plate represents a series

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of waves of unequal length, making a plate which, naturalistically considered, is a monstrosity. The pear on this plate is almost as large as the plate itself.

The object of all these distortions is perceptible in every case, that is, they contribute to make the design more interesting than naturalistic portrayal would be. Cézanne's purpose was to strip away the familiar appearance of things and offer an object which is interesting in itself by reason of the formal relations between its constituent elements; these more interesting, individual objects enter into formal relations with other objects and constitute plastic units entitled to consideration in their own right. In other words, Cézanne's efforts were toward the achievement of a plastic form which is made more abstract by being stripped of its formal representative qualities. Cézanne proves, more than any other man, that painting is not representation—that it is not so much the familiar aspects of objects that move us in the real world, as the formal relations of the constituents of those objects. His genius consisted in resolving an object into its component planes and recombining them with variations of his own to achieve distinctive forms. As he used these distortions he created a symbolism which affords a sufficient clue to the identity of things to give them a known value, together with an added value by reason of the new forms created. All of these forms are legitimate plastic creations, and constitute style of the highest type.

Cézanne's high place as an artist is determined more by his use of color than by any other factor. He had a rare feeling for color, and the results he accomplished with it are comparable to those of any other painter. Perhaps more than any other artist he succeeded in rendering perspective in terms of color whereby deep space is made more dynamic in its potential uses. Color is one of the means by which all distortions are effected and harmoniously composed. Even when the line is grossly distorted by accentuation, the line either is color itself or is in a moving formal relation with adjacent colors which makes the drawing more powerful. The distorted planes in his best work are rendered in terms of color, and these planes of color fuse into new forms which are Cézanne's very own. His genius lay in his extraordinary ability to put these colors in equilibrium; that is, color does not appear as a succession of isolated spots but is something which enters into formal relations with all the other plastic elements, flows into all parts of the canvas, and organizes the painting by means of distinctive color-forms.

This synthesis of distortions, perceptible with reference to all the plastic means, and so employed that the distorted planes of color interpenetrate in an infinite variety of ways, makes his paintings so extraordinarily dynamic that the feeling of abstract power in his best work is fully equal to that in the best work of Michel Angelo. Indeed, in this respect his achievements are the finer of the two because they are purely pictorial, with none of the admixture of sculptural *motifs* to be found in Michel Angelo.

In the best work of Cézanne we feel everything in terms of a powerful wave of warmth and color that flows from one end of the canvas to the other in



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rhythmic units, in all possible directions, and in an infinite variety of combinations. No artist has ever realized better the secret of contrasting colors and of establishing new relations of tones. Everything he touches he animates. The animation and movement owe nothing to representative or narrative values, but are accomplished by abstract plastic forms which derive their great emotional power principally from color, which is structural and organic in the highest sense of those words.

This feeling for design and the particular value of color is seen even in the earliest work done under the influence of Delacroix and Courbet. It is apparent in those later works which show his struggle to obtain mastery of the use of paint. One does not need to be familiar with the history of his life to see that these struggles were great, and that they lasted throughout his entire career. Even in his late work when he has attained complete mastery of his means, as always, he is untiring in his effort to use these means—color above all—in the creation of new and unprecedented forms.

**Mount Saint Victoire** (No. 13). The first effect is that of a rhythm which carries the eye from one end of the canvas to the other: the rhythms flow in all directions. In the background the rhythm is made up of a series of mountains of different heights, the general shape of which approaches the round. In the middle distance is a rhythm of masses made up of small houses, slight hills or variations in degrees of flatness of the ground. In the foreground there is a rhythm of bushes and just back of that a rhythm of trees. None of these rhythms is monotonous; for instance, in the background there is variation in the sizes and shapes of the hills and in different parts of the hills. In the foreground there is variation in the size of the bushes, their outlines, their position in different planes. At times the rhythm becomes almost a mighty roll, as in the mountains. It is a slighter roll in the foreground and a larger roll in the trees and two houses just back of the foreground. There is a variation in these rhythms in other respects than in their sizes. For instance, to the right of the canvas from the middleground to the beginning of the hills on the right side of the canvas, there is a flat area in which the rhythm is not in the size of the objects but in the color and light. In the left middleground, where there are few or no trees, slight elevations in the ground make another series of rhythms produced by lines and colors. These rhythms hold the attention by their variety in size of objects, lines, colors, masses, and this variety heightens their effectiveness. For example, in the foreground there begins a series of slight rhythms of the bushes, which immediately becomes very much larger in volume in the trees in the middleground, and drops to a flat surface, which is a rhythm of small houses, color, lines, etc. It then starts in a larger volume by the foothills of the mountains, then in a still larger volume by mountains of another degree of height, and attains a climax in the mountain peak. The transition from the foothills to the peak is another series of rhythms of color, line, variations in height of land, etc. It is like a Bach fugue, but is even more varied.

This rhythm is accomplished by all the known plastic means—line, light,

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color, space, mass, perspective. Some of the rhythms and color-forms are effected by contrasting colors, some by sharp contrasts, but usually the means is a graduation in the degree of light. The masses are made rhythmic by their variation in size, line and color, rather than by any bilateral duplication around a central mass. The space is rhythmic by virtue of the difference in size of the intervals between the various objects. The drawing is made rhythmic by being broken up into all possible degrees of straight, horizontal, vertical, oblique and curvilinear lines. The perspective is so merged with color that it cannot be separated from it: that is, color gives the perspective its compelling charm; and that perspective is a series of rhythmic dispositions of space between objects. With all this active functioning of space and perspective we are conscious of no accentuation of either. We feel the distance, the spaciousness, that gives the grandeur to nature.

*Composition:* There is some tendency in the general composition toward a bilateral symmetrical distribution around central masses. For instance, in the middleground the clump of trees and the two houses function as a central mass, with the bilaterally balanced masses consisting, on the right side, of a comparatively flat piece of land, and on the left side, of slightly elevated land. When the attention is fixed upon that symmetrical design, the eye is gradually carried from the middleground up to the peak of the mountain which is approximately the center of the canvas. To the right of this high peak is a decidedly lower mountain with graceful, flowing, curving line, which is balanced on the left by a line which slopes gradually from the peak of the mountain down almost to the middleground. Between the central mass in the middleground and the apex of the mountain, there is always a focal point which arrests the attention and a corresponding element to the right and to the left to effect symmetrical balance. But in no case is there an exact duplication of elements: each unit is so varied from the corresponding elements on the opposite side that we get a picturesque variety. The essential feature of the canvas is a rhythm consisting of color, line, mass, space. In it there is great variety in the use of every one of the plastic means.

The modeling of trees, houses and other objects is done by his usual modulation of tone used in conjunction with light; the result in each case is a fine three-dimensional solidity, which never stands out as an accentuation but is felt as a reality.

This picture proves that Cézanne was an impressionist in the sense of using light as one of the chief motives and as a unifying factor in the canvas. The pattern made by the light is very complicated, infinitely varied, and harmoniously related to the other units. The shadows are rich in color-quality, never dull or drab. All parts of the canvas are bathed in light and the pattern of that light is a strong reinforcement of the color-forms which unify the canvas. Wherever the eye rests, the canvas is of compelling interest because of the fusion of the plastic means. That is, if any part of the canvas were cut out it would be in itself a plastic unit.



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His palette in this canvas is really limited yet the effect is one of an infinite variety of colors. The actual colors are red, yellow, green, but these are used in conjunction with light so that there are many variations of tone. The color is rich, deep, penetrating, all-pervading. The painting is color-composition of the highest grade.

The **Portrait of Madame Cézanne** (No. 710) is a characteristic Cézanne form with distortions in the face and hands; it is of general dark color which stands out well from a gray background which is almost a gray monochrome on one side and mottled gray deeply tinged with light on the other. There is symmetrical composition in that there are duplicating units on each side of the canvas, but they depart from exact bilateral duplication by virtue of different color-qualities in each side of the background; the head is at a slight angle, so that the two sides of the head are not exactly alike; the hair is slightly less in volume on one side; one eye is slightly lower than the other; the right ear is visible and the left is not; there is more reddish color in the right side of the face than on the left; the mouth is so distorted that more of it is on one side than the other; the left shoulder is defined by a line which is broken into short curves, so that the shoulder is a series of wavy swellings, while the right shoulder is practically a straight line with only one variation toward a definite projecting curve; the hands are crossed, but the right hand extends much further toward the opposite side of the picture than the left; the shawl projects more on one side than on the other at the level of the hands, and the lines of each side of the shawl are broken up, but quite differently. The floor back of the woman is visible more on one side than on the other and is of a different shape, as well as decidedly modified in color; the result is a different color-form on the two sides of the floor. All the above variations illustrate Santayana's account of the picturesque; the eye demands a balance of symmetrical units on each side of a center, but that balance is increased in picturesqueness by departure from exact duplication.

Feeling for space is good: the figure is felt as in a room and with space back of it. There is no tendency to infinity of space as in many of the best portraits. The variations in color of the left and right side of the background merge into a harmonious whole.

*Drawing:* Contours are defined by a line which, while sharp, is not incisive. The line never extends very far in one direction but is broken up either by changes in direction or by modifications of color, so that it is always interesting. No tendency for color in the line to overflow the contours as in Renoir; that is, line makes a sharp differentiation between the object depicted and its surroundings. Line is very often ragged in spots although there is enough general continuity of the line to define contours.

*Color:* Departure from naturalistic color of flesh toward a greenish, ghastly cast, tinged with spots of subtle red. Colors in the face are not solid areas, but are modulated with tones ranging from blue through many variations of tone to a bluish-green. The red on the cheeks has no tendency

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to be sharply confined to the cheeks, but extends on one side in an irregular streak from just under the eye down to below the mouth, and is limited to a narrow area not more than a half-inch in width. On the left side of the face the red is placed in contrast with an irregular streak of light bluish-green slightly modulated with white. On the opposite side of the face the red is contrasted with a streak of decidedly darker color, also mottled with light, which forms a shadow. The nose is light bluish-green at the top, with a streak of red on one side, and a dense shadow of mottled blue extending the whole of the opposite side. The end of the nose is bluish-green, modified with a subtle red very sparsely used. The line defining the contour of both lips is made imperceptible in parts by an irregular streak of bluish-green applied in the form of a triangle at the left side; this is obviously a shadow, but its effect is to accentuate the distortion. Underneath the nose, a deep shadow of dark blue makes a triangle coming down to join the triangle of lighter bluish-green just mentioned. This latter shadow accentuates the deformation, and enters into a color-design with the first triangle around the mouth. The forehead is a mixture of brown, blue and subtle red, all modulated with white to make a design. The composite effect of the color in the face is a definite design, which is bizarre in itself and which tends to accentuate the general deformation of the face.

The color scheme of the face is duplicated in the hands so that we get the same effects as noted in the face, including bizarre color-forms. Colors in face and hands enter into fine harmonious relations with each other.

The painting of the crossed hands is very broad. In one hand the thumb and one finger are separable into units, but the other fingers are merged into an almost solid mass. On one side of the picture the canvas is left bare in the region of one of the fingers, so that the color of the bare canvas functions in the color-design. The effect of the hands and face, when looked at from a distance, is of overwhelming solidity and reality. We feel them as creations rather than natural flesh, but there is a grasp of the essential reality of flesh.

The color in the shawl, while of general uniform appearance, is a mixture of various tones extending from very dark blue to a light blue with a greenish tinge. This gives the effect of the texture of a real object, but in terms of a color-design which functions as a plastic unity rather than as a literal duplication of textile. The slightly perceptible skirt forms a symmetrical design, in which the center note is of a richer and deeper color than its bilateral duplications, which are of the same general tone though less bright and less rich. The dominant color here is a brownish-yellow mottled with subtle blues and slight suggestions of green. The skirt makes a pattern of lines and colors; the lines differentiating the skirt from shawl and background are irregular and ragged, but essentially continuous in each case. In all the areas thus far discussed there is an infinite variety of pleasing patterns made up of interrelated lines and colors.

*Modeling:* Every object in the picture has a subtle but convincing three-dimensional solidity. The modeling is done by two distinctly perceptible



but coöperatively working elements—color and light. The color is not solid and uniform as in the old masters, but is modulated; that is, put on in small areas with constant variations of the tones by means of light. The light is not felt as the sole means of modeling, as in Leonardo, but it is so closely combined with the color that the color and light jointly accomplish the modeling. This method of modeling is forecast in the best work of Tintoretto and is taken over by El Greco, but it differs from that method in that the light is less pronounced in Cézanne's modeling; in addition color functions more and more subtly than in either of the above painters. This modeling is clearly a result of impressionism, both in the manner of using the light and in the division of the color into contrasting tones that give, at a distance, the effect of uniformity. By Cézanne's method the result is a more moving solidity than that of the early impressionists. The distortions are Cézanne's own modification and adaptation of those which had their origin in Tintoretto and became one of the principal means by which El Greco obtained his particular effects.

*Light:* A definite pattern is made by the light. Starting at the extreme upper left corner of the canvas, there is an irregular rectangular spot of light which increases gradually in intensity from the corner until it becomes almost a spotlight of illumination at the back of the head; it is very much diminished by the dark brown of the hair (which in itself is interspersed with light), extends down over the face, appears in various isolated places in the shawl, becomes larger in size again by its distribution over almost the entire area of both hands, and continues down the central part of the gown. On each side of the shawl, on the background, and on the floor, are other spots of light which enter into this pattern; even in the upper right part of the background, the monotone is relieved by subtle modulations of light. The result is a bizarre pattern of light which includes every part of the canvas.

*Summary:* No element in the picture is overaccentuated. The drawing is original, and is done with line and color fused; in some cases, notably in distortions, the drawing is accomplished by blunt isolated spots of color. Color is rich and deep, is structurally used and functions everywhere in composing the picture. The masses are of three-dimensional solidity, but we do not feel the solidity in isolation from the other factors. Modeling is done with line, light and color, welded into a new form of unity. It is different from that of any other painter, even of those who influenced him, Tintoretto and El Greco. The painting gives a plastic form which is so real and convincing that we feel it is a distinct entity, and are not conscious of the distortions. The human figure is only an excuse for the creation of a plastic form, but it has sufficient anchors in representative quality to tie the picture to this world. Plastic form is thus made the means of increasing human values. For instance, no human hands ever looked like those hands; yet we feel that they are solid and real, and they get those qualities from the plastic means used in such conjunction that a design of intensely moving power is achieved.

## CÉZANNE

**Still-Life (No. 711).** The first effect is of a rich, colorful design. The composition is extraordinarily compact, well knit together, not overcrowded. It organizes in bilateral units by means of the basket, one corner of which is placed in the middle of the canvas near the background and extends backwards with diagonal lines towards the left and the right. This in itself is an unusual compositional feature. From that angle of the basket which forms the central focal organizing point, bilaterally balanced compositional units may be found in practically all parts of the canvas, but nowhere is there exact duplication; indeed so far is the departure from duplication that when the balancing elements are looked at not as masses but in terms of their constituents, we find a radical difference. For instance, filling of the space to right and left of the table is dissimilar. Where the table stops on the right side, the space is occupied by a napkin which drops from the edge of the table, occupies the right corner of the table, and continues it out as a mass. When we look for a duplicating unit on the left to correspond, we find another napkin extending from the end of the table, but not so far to the left as the napkin to the right. Between the extreme right of the canvas and the first napkin there is a triangular space filled with rich color, with a corresponding triangular space, but of different shape and size, on the left side. The units on the table to the right and left of the central point of the corner of the basket are very unequally distributed if one considers them with regard to number of objects, but they are very beautifully balanced if one considers them as groups. For instance, on the right side is a plate containing seven peaches and pears; on the left side is a napkin which functions as a unit duplicating the plate; upon this napkin there are only four very irregularly distributed peaches and pears. The group of seven pieces of fruit on the plate finds its balancing element on the left side by the folds in the napkin. These folds make a pattern, just as the seven pieces of fruit on the plate make a pattern, and each of these designs is totally different. However, we feel the union between the two units of plate and napkin with their respective contained designs.

Further instances of symmetry increased in value by variety are found in those parts of the canvas immediately adjacent to the extreme right and left edges. In each case, at the top there is a straight line which seems to stop in the background, but is carried by the napkin on the right side and by the lines of the objects on the table at the left side all the way down to the bottom of the canvas and to the extreme foreground; in other words, there is a narrow rectangular mass on each side, and these masses are varied in color, in their constituent objects, and even in their shape, by the various objects to the extreme right and extreme left of the canvas, including the obvious decoration of the wall which differs on the right side from that on the left side. This duplication of units gives a rhythm which pervades the whole canvas.

*Drawing:* The line in general is sharp and defines all contours, but is rarely incisive. It varies from extreme sharpness to broad raggedness.



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The line is so fused with color that both color and line function in defining contours. In depicting an object, one part will be rendered by a sharp line which becomes ragged in another part of the object; this variation in the quality of the line is seen to be deliberate, for the enrichment of design.

*Modeling:* Here we find in exaggerated form Cézanne's characteristic method of modeling by juxtaposed contrasting colors modulated with light. The color has spots of light to accentuate the part nearest the eye, but there is always, very close to the light, a spot of bright rich color, and in consequence we feel the modeling as light and color rather than merely as light. In some places color overflows the line as it does constantly in Renoir, but there is always sufficient line or changing color to differentiate the object from its background. In this picture Cézanne reaches the height of his use of color, both in variety and richness. Practically all the colors of the spectrum are here; they are all deep and penetrate into the object. In the case of the middle peach on the plate, two leaves extend in the form of a band over the peach and make a design like a striped, rich, red textile. Perspective is distorted and so rendered in terms of color that we feel it not primarily as distance, but as a rich design. The canvas is of extraordinary brightness, not only by reason of the bright colors, but because of the light, which touches spots in every part of the canvas and makes a pattern which has in itself a strong appeal.

Space composition is beautifully realized in the well-defined intervals between the objects and in the spaciousness of the whole picture, which we feel as an integral part of the plastic form.

This picture also exemplifies well the tendency which the impressionists adopted as part of their technique, to abolish perspective as a rendering of distance, and to replace it by an arrangement of objects almost perpendicular, which gives the effect of a screen. This has been commented upon in the work of Fra Filippo Lippi, the Persians, Matisse and other painters.

*Summary:* Every area of this picture is rich and glowing in color. All the plastic elements, line, space, color, and mass, are here used in Cézanne's quite individual way and in balanced measure. The picture is composed by means of color into a design which arrests the attention at first glance and holds our interest after analysis.

### VAN GOGH'S TECHNIQUE <sup>1</sup>

In **Landscape** (No. 136), representing a group of houses placed diagonally in the middleground, the color-spots in the foreground and in the sky are very similar to those of Pissarro and Monet. There is a series of deep, brilliant greens, yellows, reds, blues and ivories that form in general the color-composition of the foreground and middleground. These are thrown into relief by a background, the general tendency of which is towards a

<sup>1</sup> The paintings upon which this study is based are in the collection of the Barnes Foundation.

## VAN GOGH

rose-pink, and which is done in the impressionistic manner, made especially animated by the decided circular swirl. The gables and the outlines of the roofs are rendered in wavy, oblique lines, repeated with less exaggeration in the other parts of the houses, and continued in the bushes in front of the houses where the line wavers horizontally. The result is a contrast between the lines of the houses and the lines of the bushes.

In the **Postman** (No. 37), the color-spots are longer and are applied in his characteristic manner of narrow, long, ribbon-like brush-strokes. These are used even in the modeling of the face, in a manner similar to that employed by Renoir in the late seventies. The figure is a series of brilliant reds, yellows, greens and blues, making in themselves an interesting color-form. The background consists of a wall of pink flowers done with the impressionistic brushwork on a background of green, almost monochrome but varied somewhat by the use of light. Distortions in the features are somewhat in evidence, with the effect of distortion increased by use of obviously unnatural color-effects: the mustache and a good part of the beard are rendered in a pea-green color, shading off in some places to a yellowish-green. Here again the keynote of the design is contrast.

In the **Smoker** (No. 119), the color is applied broadly, more in the manner of Manet, with a tendency in the face toward the characteristic brushwork of Hals, except that bright color is applied instead of Hals's pastelike tones. The figure is done in reds and yellows, with tendency toward greenish-brown, while the background is two shades of light blue, varied at one side by a curtain extending almost to the bottom of the canvas, which has red streaks at the top and is violet for the rest of the distance. The distortions are made more apparent by the broad brush-strokes which make the eyes cavernous, and similar distortions about the nose accentuate the contrast between the nose and the eyes. Here also the face is rendered in a non-naturalistic color, which accentuates the effect of distortion and contrast.

In the **Reclining Nude** (No. 720), the foreground is a yellow, red and ivory, and the background a blue varied with a slight amount of brownish-red and white. But the contrast between the foreground, middleground, and background is less striking because of the use of less brilliant colors and because the whole painting, including the nude, is done with the characteristic narrow, long, ribbon-like spots of contrasting color.

In the **Landscape** (No. 303), representing a factory, there is distortion in every object depicted. The smokestacks are done in a long wavy line and are never entirely vertical. The road in the foreground is painted with oblique, broad ribbon-like strokes of contrasting yellows, browns and greens. One of the factory buildings is painted with vertical, ribbon-like strokes of color, and the other buildings are painted with smaller brush-strokes which run horizontally. A group of small objects at the right, indistinguishable in their identity, are done with a curvilinear brush-stroke which gives the effect of a swirl. The sky is painted in a series of small color-spots resembling



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very much the pointillist method of Seurat. The color application varies from long, ribbon-like streaks to oval spots in the sky, thus making a series of lines which contrast in color, in size, and in area, and produce a design which is quite moving.

### BONNARD

**Lamp-Lighted Interior (B.F.) (No. 275).** The picture owes its value to the successful use of color, which organizes compactly the various structural and decorative elements. The yellow shade of the lighted lamp in the center of the composition is balanced by lamps of the same general shape and color on each side, with the reflection of these yellows in the window and mirror. This yellow note has an appealing formal relation to the design made by the red dresses in three of the four figures represented; this in turn relates itself to the design made by the three red areas of the curtains. Between those three separate color-forms there is a subsidiary design made up of another yellow color-form, consisting of the dress of one of the figures, the top of the table, and the cushion on the window-seat. This yellow is repeated in another color-form made up of the two areas of the walls, in which the general color is yellow, but is modified by streaks of green. Still another color-form is that of the roughly reproduced textile effect in the bottom part of the table, the back of the window-seat, and several streaks in the wall. It is the relation of these color-forms to each other and to the linear patterns made up of the contours of various objects that give the painting its high plastic value. Here color functions everywhere and knits the whole composition together.

### GLACKENS<sup>1</sup>

For five years Cézanne's "Femme au Chapeau Vert" has been hanging on a wall, flanked on one side by Glackens's **Portrait of Artist** (No. 105) and on the other by Goya's "Portrait of Dr. Galos." Nothing could be more diverse than the kinds of painting represented, but there has been a perfect harmony between the three. The first feeling in looking at the wall was that of the rugged strength of each painting, with each ruggedness of a different kind. The portrait of Glackens is reminiscent of nobody's painting but his own. The figure, in a coat the general color of which is tan, is placed against a background of dark mottled red and brown, animated by spots of color put on with visible brush-strokes. The design of the picture consists in the relations between that figure and that background, which are unified into a whole that is animated and sparkling everywhere. There is a convincing three-dimensional solidity in which light, line and color are merged into an appealing design. The application of paint is broad, loose and fluent, and the color, which is alive at every point, brings the whole picture together into a convincing and solid ensemble.

<sup>1</sup> All of the paintings by Glackens here analyzed are in the collection of the Barnes Foundation.

## GLACKENS

**The Float** (No. 701), representing a group of bathers on a float, with diving boards, scintillates like a cluster of jewels. The composition is made up of a group of masses—float, boats, wharf, house in the distance—that follow each other in a rhythmic sequence with harmonious spatial intervals between them. There is no central mass, the painting organizing about the largest mass, the float, which is almost at the extreme left of the canvas. Every mass in the painting enters into balanced relations with the largest mass, so that any object in the canvas may be selected as a point of departure for rhythms which flow from one object to the other with extraordinary grace. The surface of the water and sky is in itself a fine composition of relations in an area of different shades of blue, modulated with light, which vary from small spots on the water to large areas in the sky. The color is as rhythmic as the compositional units and spatial intervals, and it has a vividness, a depth, a glow which amounts to an iridescence. The drawing of the figures is stripped to the point of extreme simplicity by the absence of detail and yet nothing could be more real than those figures. The narrative of the bathing hour is merely an excuse for the organization of line, space, color and mass into an ensemble firmly knit together by rich, juicy, glowing, fluid color. This painting is proof of Glackens's ability to take the color-forms of Renoir and use them as a starting point for the creation of a form which has nothing in common with Renoir's except the quality and organizing power of color.

The **Race Track** (No. 138) is as perfect an example of a sun-lighted area as exists in the work of any of the great impressionists. We feel the sunlight in the same way that we feel it on a hot summer day, that is, as a background to whatever is taking place, and something that would impress us with its identity if we selected it for observation. The colors are glaring in both their quality and their infusion with light; but there is no garishness or stridency. None of the objects are naturalistically rendered. No grass was ever as green as that grassplot, no clay was ever as reddish-yellow, no sky was ever of that quality of blue, no roofs were ever as iridescent as these. The colors are more reminiscent of Matisse than they are of any of the impressionists, yet their quality, manner of combination, and contrasts are radically different from those of Matisse. Here Glackens uses color creatively with wonderful results. It has an individual sensuous quality, and is the means of organizing the canvas into a color-form totally different from that to be found in any other painter. His drawing is broad and loose and is made up of a successful merging of line, light and color that portrays the essential quality of objects at rest and in movement. The painting conveys the very spirit of a race track on a summer day, with all the background of myriads of subtle feelings that charge the event with its intrinsic quality.

In **Woman on Sofa** (No. 306), Glackens has achieved the effects of Degas's line, Manet's method of applying paint, Renoir's feeling for femininity, in a form which he makes his own. It has, in solution, the feeling of all the above-mentioned artists. It is *genre*-painting raised to a high degree of



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aesthetic value and made more appealing and distinctive by reduction of the objects to bare essentials.

**Flowers** (No. 267): a bunch of gladioli, zinnias, chrysanthemums, and asters are in a jar which is blue at the top and molded into an iridescent admixture of yellow, blue and white. This jar and flowers are placed upon a background of pinks and reds tinged with yellow and richly lighted. The rendering of the color-values, which make the definition between the flowers, jar and background, is so subtle that it is impossible to say how it is accomplished. The whole painting is of a floating, delicate lightness that can be compared only to a rich foam. Here also Glackens has taken Renoir's color-forms and rendered them in his own terms, so that something new emerges, reminiscent of Renoir only in the quality of color and its activity in knitting together the whole painting.

**Girl and Tulips** (No. 160) shows Glackens's ability to achieve compositional and color-effects comparable to the best of Matisse. The painting represents a girl in a bright mottled gown, placed against a background of contrasting colors consisting of a general bluish-green in the middle, yellow draped curtains to the right and left, and to the extreme left a strip of pinkish-violet. To the left also is a table on which is a green jar containing red, yellow, pink and white tulips. The canvas owes its power to a contrast of broad areas of color, all the units of which are diversified by subtle gradations of varying degrees of brilliance. The design, which is highly moving by reason of its unusual manner of construction, represents one of the great achievements of contemporary painting in the creation of an effective design.

### MAURICE PRENDERGAST

**Landscape** (*B.F.*) (No. 216) represents the height of his powers in achieving a design by means of his own technique. Individual spots of light and color, as such, exist only in very few places, where they function as linear and color-elements that enter into harmonious relation with various objects and produce strongly moving rhythms of color and line. For instance, in the water in the foreground a few small spots of color and light are perceptible close to objects such as boats and figures, some of which are rendered in long horizontal masses and others in vertical masses of comparatively solid color. In the middleground the banks are represented by contrasting broad horizontal masses of color which undulate from the extreme right of the canvas to beyond the center and become short, wavy strokes of darker color at the extreme left. These masses of color, tending in a general horizontal direction, are relieved by frequent vertical masses, such as figures, houses, trees; those figures and houses function as units contrasting in color and direction with the general horizontal tendency of the design. As a result the whole canvas is a succession of contrasts of line, color, mass and spatial relations, that give rise to a series of rhythms comparable to those of a Bach

## LUKS

fugue. For instance, the horizontal, lilac-pink river bank in the middle-ground serves as a starting point for one of the fugues; it first changes its direction to the slightly oblique, then changes in color by interspersions of green which makes a new unit in the fugue; that in turn is modified by line and color interspersions up to a house with white walls and red roof; each element in the house with its surrounding objects is so varied that its details take on the character of a succession of individual rhythms which maintain the same general fugue character. The lilac-pink of the river bank in its entire length may be considered as one of the main themes of the fugue, and this is duplicated with minor variations in a mass of clouds which extends all the way across the top of the canvas; between these two factors the same *motif* is repeated in general direction, but is so varied in color and line that it merges as a whole into a general fugue form. In every part there are an infinite number of minor variations of color, line, mass, space and general treatment, which correspond to the internal variations of contrapuntal music.

## EAKINS

**Dr. Agnew (B.F.)** (No. 341). This three-quarter-length figure is a study made for the composition showing Dr. Agnew in his surgical clinic and surrounded by a group of assistants and nurses. This single figure is a positive creation plastically, done in a manner reminiscent chiefly of Velasquez, but with the influence of the Hals and Manet traditions clearly in evidence. The modeling has a convincing three-dimensional solidity, the drawing is sure, firm and highly expressive, there is delicate space-composition of a high order. The posture of the figure is graceful, fluid and light, and is strongly suggestive, both in manner of execution and the total general effect, of the poised movement which Velasquez rendered with such reality. The color is limited practically to several shades of brown; this, together with white, is used with such subtle distinctions and values that the figure stands out from the background, and both the background and the figure merge into a unified whole. The painting achieves a dignity, majesty and reality that succeed in carrying the obvious, strong character of the subject. Eakins rarely rose to the heights represented by this picture. His drawing is usually tight, and his general handling of the plastic elements tends towards the production of a skillful but essentially academic painting.

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**The Blue Churn (B.F.)** (No. 391). This is an interior representing a seated woman churning, surrounded by two geese, two buckets and various vaguely indicated objects in the background. The general feeling is that of the best of the *genre*-painters who used an adaptation of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro. In this painting, chiaroscuro has been so successfully adapted that the essentially somber character of the colors is illuminated by the use of rich, juicy tones in the face, gown, churn and objects in the foreground.



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The basic effect of Rembrandt, the placing of a figure in a background, similar in color values, is here realized very successfully, and with quite personal distinction. In spite of its dark character, everything in the painting glows, even the dark background. The drawing is loose and vigorous and is done with paint in a manner which is a combination of the Dutch tradition with Manet's broad brush-strokes. This drawing, the method of application of paint, and the rich, juicy quality of the color, give an effective simplicity with comparatively little attention to the duplication of naturalistic details. At a distance all of the features in the face and other parts of the body, as well as the geese and the pails, are sufficiently representative of what they are; but the drawing and manner of the application of paint give a simplicity and a reality more convincing than the detailed painting of most of the Dutch *genre*-painters. The composition tends toward the commonplace scheme of central mass with duplicating units to right and left, but the conventionality of the composition is leavened by a note of novelty and interest in the disposition of the various areas of light and color. In all parts of the canvas the spatial intervals between the objects are clearly felt and give a form of space-composition which contributes to the aesthetic effect of the ensemble.

### MATISSE <sup>1</sup>

In the **Still-Life** (No. 133) Matisse's distinctive color, applied in small spots, lends a rugged and original solidity to the jar and organizes the painting by means of varied and contrasting colors. Another small painting, **No. 35**, of a somewhat later period, consists of a juxtaposition of small areas of different bright colors, varied in size, shape and direction, and placed apparently at random in different parts of the picture. There is such a total departure from naturalism that it is impossible to say what the subject-matter is. It is probably intended as a landscape, but we feel it as a rhythmic use of different bright colors that unify into an organic plastic form. In painting **No. 84** there is just sufficient continuity of line to enable the spectator to recognize that it is the figure of a woman in a brightly colored gown. Here, too, the interest is in design, of which color is the organizing component. In the background there is evidence of literal perspective, but the colors are so skillfully used that the background may be looked upon either as a flat screen, or as a rendering of infinite distance. The whole canvas moves rhythmically in terms of color, reinforced by wavy lines of different shapes, sizes and directions. The design of this picture is reminiscent of that of the Japanese, but is more moving because of the better color and less obvious use of plastic means.

The first early important influence upon Matisse, that of Cézanne, is seen in the **Landscape** (No. 73). With a tree in foreground, clump of objects in middleground, sea and sky in background, Matisse has taken over a

<sup>1</sup> All the paintings upon which this discussion is based are in the collection of the Barnes Foundation.

## MATISSE

familiar composition of Cézanne, but he has so simplified the use of the plastic means that the painting has a form which is definitely Matisse's. The brilliant colors are used broadly to depict objects, and with so little attention to outlines that they function as spots of color; the details, except for the rendering of the roofs by broad areas of color, are not perceptible. The effect obtained is a rhythmic moving of voluminal masses in deep space, such as is achieved by Cézanne; but here Matisse depends more upon color, while Cézanne reinforced color by more definitely modeling and outlining objects. The result is less solidity in the objects, but the color makes the solidity sufficient for the design. Here, as in all of Matisse's important work, the effect is obtained by the rhythmic use of contrasting colors, employed with such variation in size, shape and direction that there is great variety in the rhythmic units. These rhythms themselves effect a contrast by reason of their size and disposition in the various parts of the canvas. The composite effect of the picture is a rhythmic flow of color in all directions; as a result, a new and distinctively Matisse form is realized.

In the *Still-Life* (No. 64), the influence of Cézanne is very apparent both in the subject-matter and in the attempt to establish the dynamic relations between objects by means of their spatial relations. Matisse has taken over Cézanne's method of defining the contour of objects by a heavy, ragged line, and of placing colors on each side of that outline to make the color function strongly in the drawing. Distortions are apparent in all the plastic elements employed—space, line, color, shape of objects. Totally different colors and treatment take away any close resemblance to Cézanne. All the colors are vivid and brilliant. They vary from Cézanne's in their application in broad areas, strikingly differentiated in quality, and in the construction of individual objects which show little suggestion of modeling. Line, light and color are used to realize a considerable three-dimensional solidity in the melon, and, to a less extent, in the lemon and the jar.

Originality and power of design are achieved by individual rendering of the objects on the table, by the contrast of the table as a unit with the background made up of strong contrasting colors rendered more interesting by variation in their tones by light, by obvious brush-strokes, and by lines defining the different parts of the background. The masses move rhythmically by reason of their size and disposition in space, and because the color-designs in each of the objects increase their animation. When abstracted from its function as representing the surfaces of objects, the color moves rhythmically all over the canvas and creates a distinctive Matisse color-design.

In the large painting *Joie de Vivre* (No. 719), brilliant color, quite original in its quality, is used as a means of achieving a design of great aesthetic power. The color rhythms here assume a larger volume and add increased power to the design by the very size of those rhythms, as well as by their operation at the right and left as balancing compositional elements around other rhythmic lines and colors, which function as more or less centrally



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placed masses. For example, one may select as a central mass either the reclining nude in the immediate center of the foreground, or the nude immediately above it, or the ring of dancing nudes just above the second nude, and in each case the eye finds a balanced satisfaction to the right and left by virtue of the large color-areas mentioned. This balance of rhythms gets an added force from corresponding compositional units on each side varying in size, shape and direction. In other words, the central objects function not only as masses but as color-rhythms. These are reinforced by irregular, wavy and ragged lines defining the outlines of all objects and color-masses. The rhythms flow in many different directions. For instance, if the horizontal rhythms are selected as points of departure, the foreground, made up of a group of pink nudes reclining on a strip of blue ground, enters into formal relations with the strip of yellow just above it; that in turn makes a rhythm with the two reclining nudes immediately above; then further above comes the ring of dancing nudes placed upon a large area of yellow interspersed with green; then above that unit is a broad horizontal band, made up of blue at one end, which disappears in the center of the general pink of the background, and then emerges at the right as a band of the same width, but made up of pink, violet and red.

The units in every part of the canvas are made up of these contrasting colors arranged rhythmically, and these units may be considered as either the individual figures, or the figure in relation to its color or adjacent object. But whatever unit is selected this rhythm of color is found. The composite effect of the canvas is a series of rhythms which flow in and about all parts of the canvas; these rhythms are essentially color, and when lines are employed they assume the character of color as well as line. All the colors are brilliant; their tendency toward garishness and stridency disappears entirely in the effect which they obtain by being related to each other, that is, made elements in the total color-composition. The principal influences here are Persian and Hindu, but Matisse modified them in all their aspects—drawing of figures, placing of masses in composition, and especially accentuation of the individual features of the body. While this painting is essentially flat and is highly decorative, it is not mere decoration because the structural elements of plastic form are all present in sufficient degree. The modeling of the bodies, while slight, is clearly apparent. The colors used in very broad areas at the right and left of the canvas are modulated with light so that they are not merely flat masses of color, but function as voluminal masses moving in deep space. This deep space is not accentuated, but there are intervals between all the objects and masses of color which give space-composition in a degree sufficient to harmonize with the general flat nature of the canvas. In short, this picture owes its aesthetic power to rhythmic movement that embraces all the plastic elements, is infinitely varied, and functions in all parts of the canvas. The primary aesthetic value of the picture is due to the great number of formal relations established between all the plastic elements—line, space, color, mass; these formal relations

## MATISSE

always have a tendency toward rhythm, varying from mere repetition of a unit to the obvious and more complicated rhythms formed by the movement of broad masses of color in space.

*La Leçon de Musique* (No. 717), painted about 1921, represents the consummation of Matisse's powers up to that date. The picture represents a section of a room with a vista through a balcony window into a garden. The colors are less exotic than they are sometimes in his best work, and there is less tendency to distortion of features. Its strength consists in the compactness of its composition and in a utilization of every part of the canvas as an active factor in the total plastic design. There is little tendency toward a conventional central mass with balancing features on the sides, though there are several areas in the canvas that may be selected as points about which the picture organizes, and from which units radiate with the production of a series of rhythms which vary in size, shape, direction of line, kind of color and degree of space. Perspective undergoes the familiar distortion by which distance is brought to the top of the canvas, and the background as a whole appears as a screen quite close to the main objects in the foreground. It is only by divorcing perspective from its associations of distance, and by looking at it anew as one of the plastic elements to be used in the construction of plastic design, that we can appreciate the work of the painters since Courbet. In this picture, Matisse does not employ the method in question exclusively, but uses perspective to a certain extent as an indication of actual distance, so that the composite effect is of objects placed both in space and one above the other.

The colors are rendered generally in large flat areas, modulated with light. All of these color-forms are placed in contrast with each other and the large contrasting elements are always relieved by the interposition of lines, masses and other smaller color-areas. For instance, the top of the piano in broad color is relieved by a mass—a violin in a case—which in itself is a merging of all the plastic elements into a convincing, powerful form. Hence, in addition to the color-form made up of broad areas as above noted, there is a series of other color-forms made of smaller areas and broken up by the use of light and line. It is this interrelation of the two distinct color-forms just mentioned, and rendered in great variety of size, shape and direction, that constitutes a very powerful rhythm. The color areas are of different shapes—oblong, triangular, square, oval, with an occasional tendency to a rhythmic voluminal swirl, as in the foliage of the upper part of the canvas in the center. The different shapes of the color areas involve the use of lines of different sizes and directions; consequently, the rhythm consists of line and light in combination with color, but it is color which is the dominating element. Hence the rhythm is felt primarily as one of color, with the other plastic elements clearly perceptible as reinforcements. The distortions of his early work are all present here but they have been toned down in the common interest of design. The general effect of the picture is of an extraordinarily compact and balanced



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

composition. In this painting plastic form is attained by the successful organizing influence of color, which is the most difficult of all plastic means to use.

“*Joie de Vivre*” is the greatest picture of his early period, but “*La Leçon de Musique*” is a greater achievement because it reveals command over a more varied use of the plastic means. They are both definite creations; in the “*Joie de Vivre*” all the means are simple compared to the intricate complexity of those in “*La Leçon de Musique*.”

### PICASSO<sup>1</sup>

In one of his earliest paintings, **The Theater Scene** (No. 177) there is a merging of the influences of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec with the tendency to represent psychological states. The setting, even the manner of applying paint, is also reminiscent of both Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. Part of the painting is done with the impressionistic technique of juxtaposition of small color-spots, and other parts are in the broad manner of Manet.

The large picture to which Picasso gave the title **Composition** (No. 140) is one of the earliest of his important and characteristic works. It shows that fine feeling for the ordered, rhythmic sequence of objects which is to be found in most of his best paintings. It reveals also his ability to make distortion of objects an effective aid in the achievement of unusual and individual designs. A giant with enormous shoulders and arms has a head smaller than that of the little girl walking with him. The girl's waist is smaller than an infant's, although her shoulders are of normal size. The moving legs of the two figures could not possibly be in the positions represented. All of these distortions form units that enter into formal relations with other units in the picture and contribute to the rhythm of line, color, space and mass pervading the whole canvas. The distortions and their compositional value are clearly derived from El Greco and are given a setting in a color scheme brighter and more varied than is usual with Picasso. The painting reveals his originality of conception and his genius in attaining a plastic form of individuality and power.

The influence of El Greco is observable in the painting of the **Acrobat** (No. 72), in which light and shadow are used in the modeling of the face and hands, and in the tendency toward elongation of the individual parts of the body. His line also resembles that of El Greco in that it is expressive of psychological states and enters into the formation of a particular kind of design; but it is less serpentine and writhing than in El Greco, so that Picasso's designs are more simple.

In the painting of the **Baby Seated on Chair** (No. 128), the influences of El Greco are merged with those of Cézanne, so that the general effect is a personal form which has strength in spite of its reminiscences of these men.

The best paintings of Picasso's Blue Period are those in which the surface

<sup>1</sup> All the pictures upon which this discussion is based are in the collection of the Barnes Foundation.

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resemblances to Piero, El Greco and Cézanne are less evident and in which he attains more nearly to a form of his own. A characteristic painting of this period is that of the **Girl with Cigarette** (No. 318). The blue is still here, but it has become a series of contrasting blues of various shades. There is also a contrast between a reddish-yellow, in an area sufficiently large to function as a broad area of color, and the various shades of blue and the pasty-white and green of the hands and face. The general effect of the essential color-form is reminiscent of Gauguin's use of broad areas of fairly uniform color, and no doubt Gauguin influenced Picasso in this respect. This painting shows Picasso's mastery of design, with distortions of all the elements, all of them active in a distinctive design. For instance, the hands depart from the normal in color, the fingers look like stiff rods only differentiated from each other by tings of various colors, so that each hand functions as a plastic synthesis and not representatively. One elbow and one hand rest on a broad area of reddish-yellow which looks like the top of a café-table and also like a skirt; but it is impossible to say which of the two it is. The face is pasty-white, the mouth is an irregular daub of red, the shadows on each side of the nostrils are of another shade of red, the shadows under the eyes are of a still lighter shade of red, the hair is a mixture of yellow, green and dark brown. All these various colors tend to give a distorted, unnatural, ghastly look to the face, and the whole head and face represent a new creation.

The lines outlining the objects are ragged and are varied from a sharply incisive character to an exaggeration of the broad line of color which Cézanne used to define contours. The drawing of the face, arm, trunk gives a composite effect of sharp definition of the objects, which make an appealing pattern in contrast with the vague, misty appearance of the whole face. The variety and richness of the design is still further enhanced by contrast with the reddish-yellow skirt. The trunk is rendered in a series of angular patterns, and these give the painting its essential strength and appeal. For instance, the fichu makes a triangle in definite relation with the triangle of the lapels of the waist; another triangle is formed in the left of the picture by the lines of the left hand, the lapel and the right shoulder; another triangle is formed by the upper left arm and left forearm and the left lapel; another triangle is formed by the spot of reddish-yellow between the two arms at the bottom; and another area of a general triangular tendency is formed by the upper right arm and left forearm and wrist. All the triangles are varied in color, direction of line, position, and give an appealing, naïve general effect of rigidity and angularity.

The background is varied and made interesting by the use of different shades of blue, by lines of different size and direction, and by different methods of applying the paint—from the rendering of a broad area of uniform color to another area in which the general tendency is towards a contrasting lighter color made more interesting by white paint in perceptible brush-strokes.



## ANALYSES OF PAINTINGS

The painting is a contrast between a series of angular patterns which make up the figure, placed against a background of patterns of varying colors, lines and methods of applying paint. In both the figure and the background all the plastic elements are varied in a manner quite personal to Picasso, and in both the figure and the background the elements unify into designs in themselves; these two designs enter into a formal relation with each other to compose a unified, strong plastic form. The figure is decentered, but in spite of that the distribution of elements in the background, middleground and foreground satisfy the desire of the eye for balance; yet the general effect of the painting is that of a decentered figure which unites the composition in a strikingly original manner.

About 1909 Picasso's interest in sculptural forms began to be paramount and his tendency was more and more away from naturalistic reproduction, toward the rendering of abstract forms. His series of still-lives, at this period, show solid objects in such close proximity that several objects together function as a single mass of definite compositional value. His former suave, curved lines have now become sharp and heavy and the objects which they outline become decidedly angular and block-like. In the *Still-Life* (No. 87), a glass, a pear and a pickle are placed one against the other, so that there is an angular block-like mass which functions as a unit in the composition. His color has changed from the bright blues, pinks and yellows of his previous work, to a somber combination of slate, dull green and dull brownish-red. The angular and block-like effects, combined with the new color-scheme produced a plastic form which served as the point of departure for his next important period, that of cubism.

The water-color *Still-Life* (No. 69) seems to indicate that his cubism is a combination of the influences of negro art and certain Cézanne surface effects. In this picture, which is a mass of quite brilliant blues, reds, yellows, browns, in many variations, the massive sculptural effect obtained by the juxtaposition of two masses of different size, is shown in the basket of fruit and the jar immediately in front of it. The angular areas of color defined by broad ragged lines of demarcation, which give the distinctive note to the Cézanne "Landscape" (No. 89), are perceptible in this Picasso water-color in the areas to the immediate right and left of the basket of fruit and jar. The effect is that of a series of color areas which enter into harmonious relations with each other through the reinforcing effect of the heavy broad lines which separate the areas of color. It forms a design of considerable aesthetic power and represents another step towards Picasso's achievement of abstract design; that is, the realistic interest is minimized and realistic features are so distorted as to contribute toward the creation of abstract form.

In *Still-Life* (No. 673), various objects have been resolved into their component parts and those parts placed in relation with each other in such a way that there emerges a new form of powerful aesthetic appeal. There is so little literal representation of objects that it is impossible to say defi-

## PASCIN

nately what the objects are; but there is sufficient indication to enable one to select these apparently meaningless and disparate elements and organize them with one's experience with the real world. This does not mean that conscious naturalistic interpretation is necessary to an aesthetic appreciation of the painting; it means that by the constructive use of the imagination, aided by suggestions from the real world, the sense of bewilderment and strangeness is supplanted by a sense of familiar subject-matter due to the whole of our funded experience. And this use of the imagination is a positive reinforcement of the appreciation of the abstract plastic form. It is only when the parts of the objects disorganized are treated in terms of color, space, line and mass, which have formal relations of their own, that the cubist painting is entitled to consideration as a work of art. In the picture under discussion, we see such use of line, color, mass, space; one gets the feeling of planes moving both on the flat surface and in deep space, and placed in contrast with each other so that the various planes do function as line, light, color, space, for the production of a new form which has its own aesthetic appeal. Looked at as a plastic form, pure and simple, with no reference to any object with which we are familiar in the external world, we see a myriad of relations between line, color, space, which result in the production of a great number of plastic units. These individual plastic units relate themselves to each other and unite into an organic whole which has the indispensable qualities of a work of art—that is, unity and variety. The lack of appreciation of this painting by any one who supposes himself to understand the work of Titian, Velasquez, Cézanne and Renoir, is a proof that what the person in question likes in the paintings of those great artists is not the art-value, but something else. The only quality in a painting by any one of those great artists that entitles it to be considered as a work of art is precisely what is contained in this cubist painting by Picasso; that is, the relations which line, light, color, mass, space, take to each other when they become a new unity, a plastic form. This is not to say that this painting by Picasso is as great as a work of art, as one by Titian, Renoir or Cézanne, for Picasso is a lesser artist than any of these. It means merely that Picasso has created a form which has a positive aesthetic value of its own.

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**Nude (B.F.)** (No. 229). In this the whole color-scheme is reminiscent of both Renoir and Cézanne: the quality, delicacy and pastel-like feeling of the color has its parallel in some of Renoir's works, as has also the drawing of the arms, legs and chest of the figure. The drawing and modeling of the face is much in the manner of Cézanne, and the color-areas in the back part of the canvas are Pascin's own adaptation of Renoir's and Cézanne's methods of obtaining the movement of voluminal masses in deep space. The basket of fruit in the upper left-hand corner might pass as a sketch by Cézanne. The whole painting has the light, delicate, fluid rhythm of Renoir, with an admix-



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ture of Cézanne's influence as above noted. Here, as always with Pascin, the modeling is only suggestive of three-dimensional solidity, but this is not a drawback, because that kind of modeling is required to fit in with Pascin's general lightness and delicacy.

**Nude (B.F.)** (No. 182). The use of color, line, and space, which gives the nude its identity as a plastic form, is repeated in the adjoining table, the wall at the back and the bureau at the right of the canvas. All of the objects upon the table and the bureau are repetitions of the rhythmic units of color, line and space that are found in the nude, the table and the bureau. His capacity to diversify these units by the varied adaptations of color, line, light, modeling, etc., shows great ingenuity and originality. The units are similar only as plastic forms of the same general feeling, but differ in all of their constituent elements. The same statement is true of the units in picture No. 629, which also represents a nude. The whole treatment of the two paintings is different: character of subject, room, objects.

IV

LIST OF PAINTINGS

The following list includes the names of all pictures discussed or analyzed in this book, with the exception of those belonging to the Barnes Foundation Collection. Pictures mentioned but not listed are therefore to be understood as belonging to that collection:

- Albertinelli (1474-1515)** . . . "Christ Appearing to Magdalen," Louvre, Paris
- Andrea del Castagno** . . . "Pietà," Andrea del Castagno Museum, Florence  
 (1410?-1457) . . . "St. Eustasius" (attributed to the School of Andrea del Castagno), Andrea del Castagno Museum  
 . . . "The Last Supper," Andrea del Castagno Museum
- Andrea del Sarto** . . . "Madonna of the Harpies," Uffizi, Florence  
 (1486-1531)
- Antonello da Messina** . . . "The Condottiere," Louvre  
 (1430-1479)
- Giovanni Bellini** . . . "Madonna of the Alberetti," Academy at Venice  
 (1428 or 1430?-1516) . . . "Madonna," Vestry of I Frari, Venice  
 . . . "Portrait of a Man," Louvre  
 . . . "Sacred Conversation," Pitti, Florence
- Bonington (1802-1828)** . . . "The Housekeeper," Louvre
- Botticelli (1444-1510)** . . . "Destruction of Korah and Dathan and Abiram," Sistine Chapel, Rome  
 . . . "Moses Kills the Egyptian," Sistine Chapel  
 . . . "Spring," Uffizi  
 . . . "The Birth of Venus," Uffizi
- Boucher (1703-1770)** . . . "Pastoral," Louvre  
 . . . "Renaud and Armide," Louvre
- Brouwer (1605-1638)** . . . "Landscape, with Tobias and the Angel," National Gallery, London  
 . . . "Le Pansement," Louvre
- Canaletto (1697-1768)** . . . "The Grand Canal, the Salute," Louvre
- Carracci (Agostino)** . . . "Le Deluge," Louvre  
 (1557-1602)



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- Carracci (Annibale)** . . . "Diana and Calisto," Louvre  
 (1560?-1609) "La Chasse," Louvre  
 "The Apparition of the Virgin to St. Catherine and St. Luke," Louvre
- Carpaccio** (1450-1522) . "Dream of St. Ursula," Academy at Venice
- Chardin** (1699-1779) . . . "Ustensiles Variés" (No. 101), Louvre
- Cimabue** (1240?-1301?) . "The Virgin Enthroned," Uffizi
- Claude Lorrain** (1600-1682) "Seapiece," Louvre  
 "Seaport at Sunset," Louvre  
 "Village Fête," Louvre
- Constable** (1776-1837) . "Flatford Mill," National Gallery  
 "Salisbury Cathedral," National Gallery  
 "The Hay Wain," National Gallery
- Correggio** (1494-1534) . "Danaë," Borghese, Rome  
 "Jupiter and Antiope," Louvre
- Cosimo Tura** (1420-1495) "Pietà," Louvre  
 "St. Dominic," Uffizi
- Courbet** (1819-1878) . . . "La Source," Louvre  
 "Les Demoiselles du Village," Metropolitan  
 Museum, New York City  
 "The Painter's Studio," Louvre
- Coypel** (1661-1722) . . . "Esther Before Ahasuerus," Louvre
- Cranach** (1472-1553) . . . "Eve," Uffizi
- Daumier** (1810-1879) . . . "Third-Class Railway Carriage," Have-  
 meyer Collection, New York City
- Delacroix** (1798-1863) . "Death of Sardanapalus," Louvre  
 "Les Femmes d'Alger," Louvre  
 "Naufrage de Don Juan," Louvre
- Domenico Veneziano** . . . "Virgin and Child," Uffizi  
 (Working 1438-1461)
- Fleming, Unknown** . . . "Portrait of Maria Bonciani," Uffizi
- Fra Angelico** (1387-1455). "Crucifixion," Museum of San Marco,  
 Florence  
 "Descent from the Cross," Museum of San  
 Marco  
 "Transfiguration" from "Life of Jesus,"  
 Museum of San Marco
- Fra Filippo Lippi** . . . "Virgin Adoring the Child," Uffizi  
 (1406?-1469)
- Fragonard** (1732-1806) . "Bathers," Louvre  
 "Pierrot," Wallace Collection  
 "The Vow to Cupid," Louvre
- Francesco di Giorgio** . . . "Rape of Europa," Louvre  
 (1439-1502)
- Franciabigio** (1482-1525) "Portrait of a Young Man," Louvre

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- Gerard David** (1464–1523) "The Supper at Cana," Louvre
- Ghirlandaio** (1449–1494) Frescoes in Santa Maria Novella, Florence
- Giorgione** (1477–1510) . "Concert Champêtre," Louvre  
 "Madonna with St. George and St. Francis,"  
 Castelfranco
- Giotto** (1276–1336) . . . Assisi Frescoes:  
 "Flight into Egypt"  
 "Miraculous Production of a Spring of  
 Water"  
 "St. Francis and the Birds"  
 "St. Francis Clothing the Poor"  
 "St. Francis Restores His Apparel to His  
 Father"  
 "St. Francis's Vision of a Palace and  
 Weapons"  
 "St. Francis, Supporting the Lateran,  
 Appears to Pope Innocent III"  
 Padua Frescoes:  
 "Descent from the Cross"  
 "Entombment"  
 "Entry into Jerusalem"  
 "Flight into Egypt"  
 "Joachim's Vision"  
 "Joseph and Mary Returning After Their  
 Marriage"  
 "Pietà"  
 "The Baptism"
- Goya** (1746–1828) . . . "Royal Family of Charles IV," Prado,  
 Madrid
- Greuze** (1725–1805) . . . "The Village Betrothal," Louvre
- Guardi** (1712–1793) . . . "The Doge Embarking on the Bucentaur,"  
 Louvre
- Guido Reni** (1575–1642) . "Dejaneira," Louvre
- Hals** (1580?–1666) . . . "La Bohémienne," Louvre  
 "Nicolas van Beresteyn," Louvre  
 "The Laughing Cavalier," Wallace Collec-  
 tion, London
- Hooch, Peter de** . . . "Dutch Interior," Louvre  
 (1629–1677?)
- Ingres** (1780–1867) . . . "Œdipus and the Sphinx," Louvre  
 "La Source," Louvre  
 "Le Bain Turc," Louvre  
 "Portrait of Madame Rivière," Louvre
- Lancret** (1690–1743) . . . "Autumn," Louvre
- Le Moyne** (1688–1737) . "Juno, Iris and Flora," Louvre



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- Leonardo da Vinci** . . . . . "Annunciation," Uffizi  
 (1452-1519) "Bacchus," Louvre  
 "Mona Lisa," Louvre  
 "Portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli," Louvre  
 "St. John the Baptist," Louvre  
 "The Adoration of the Magi," Uffizi  
 "Vierge aux Rochers," Louvre  
 "Vierge aux Rochers," National Gallery  
 "Virgin, St. Anne and the Infant Jesus,"  
 Louvre
- Pietro Longhi** (1702-1785) "Lesson in Dancing," Academy at Venice  
**Lorenzo Lotto** (1480-1556) "Saint Jerome," Louvre  
**Pietro Lorenzetti** . . . . . "Scenes from the Life of St. Umiltà," Uffizi  
 (Working 1306-1348) "Birth of St. John the Baptist" (School  
 picture), Louvre
- Édouard Manet** (1832-1883) "Boy with a Sword," Metropolitan Museum  
 "Boy with the Fife," Louvre  
 "Dead Christ with Angels," Metropolitan  
 Museum  
 "Girl with a Parrot," Metropolitan Museum  
 "Olympia," Louvre  
 "Still-Life," Metropolitan Museum
- Manni** (Working 1493-1544) "Adoration of the Magi," Louvre  
**Mantegna** (1431-1506) . . . . . "Calvary," Louvre  
 "Parnassus," Louvre  
 "The Agony in the Garden," National  
 Gallery
- Simone Martini** (1283-1344) "The Ascent to Calvary," Louvre  
**Masaccio** (1401-1428) . . . . . "St. Peter Healing the Sick," Church of  
 Santa Maria del Carmine, Brancacci  
 Chapel, Florence  
 "St. Peter Raising Tabitha," Brancacci  
 Chapel  
 "The Tribute Money," Brancacci Chapel
- Memling** . . . . . "St. Benedict," Uffizi  
 (1430 or 1435?-1494) Triptych: "St. Sebastian," "Resurrection,"  
 "Ascension," Louvre  
 "Virgin Enthroned with Two Angels," Uffizi
- Metsu** (1630-1667) . . . . . "Still-Life," Louvre  
**Michel Angelo** (1475-1564) "Expulsion from Eden," Sistine Chapel  
 "Last Judgment," Sistine Chapel
- Lorenzo Monaco** . . . . . "Virgin and Child with Four Saints," Uffizi  
 (1370?-1425?)

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- Orcagna** (1308?-1368) . "Coronation of the Virgin," National Gallery
- Paolo Veronese** (1528-1588) "Feast in the House of Levi," Academy at Venice  
 "Flight from Sodom," Louvre  
 "Jupiter Foudroyant les Crimes," Louvre
- Perugino** (1446-1523) . "Christ Giving the Keys to Peter" (fresco), Sistine Chapel  
 "Combat of Love and Chastity," Louvre
- Piero della Francesca** . "Death and Burial of Adam," Church of San Francesco, Arezzo  
 (1416?-1492) "Discovery of the True Cross," Church of San Francesco  
 "Exaltation of the Cross," Church of San Francesco  
 "Marriage of St. Catherine" (School of Piero), Church of San Francesco  
 "Reception by Solomon," Church of San Francesco  
 "Rescue of the Cross," Church of San Francesco  
 "The Nativity of our Lord with Angels Adoring," National Gallery
- Pisanello** . . . . . "Portrait of Princess d'Este," Louvre  
 (1397 or 1399?-1455) "The Vision of St. Eustace," National Gallery
- Pollaiuolo** (1432-1498) . "Hercules Crushing Antæus," Uffizi  
 "Hercules Overcoming the Hydra," Uffizi
- Potter** (1625-1654) . . . "La Prairie," Louvre
- Poussin** (1594-1665) . . . "Cephalus and Aurora," National Gallery  
 "Funeral of Phocion," Louvre  
 "Holy Family," Louvre  
 "Judgment of Solomon," Louvre  
 "Le Paradis Terrestre," Louvre  
 "Les Aveugles de Jérico," Louvre  
 "Orfeo and Eurydice," Louvre  
 "Rape of the Sabines," Louvre  
 "The Adulteress Before Christ," Louvre  
 "The Arcadian Shepherds," Louvre  
 "Triumph of Flora," Louvre
- Raphael** (1483-1520) . . . "Ansidei Madonna," National Gallery  
 "Count Baldassare Castiglione," Louvre  
 "Entombment," Borghese  
 "Holy Family of Francis I," Louvre  
 "La Belle Jardinière," Louvre



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- Raphael—(Con.)**                   “La Donna Velata,” Pitti  
   “Madonna del Baldacchino,” Pitti  
   “Madonna with Blue Diadem,” Louvre  
   “Portrait of a Young Man,” Louvre  
   “Portrait of Maddalena Doni,” Pitti  
   “St. Michael Crushing Satan,” Louvre  
   “*The Transfiguration*,” Vatican, Rome
- Rembrandt (1606–1669)** .   “Hendrickje Stoffels,” Louvre  
   “Old Man,” Uffizi  
   “Portrait of the Artist,” Louvre  
   “*The Man with the Stick*,” Louvre  
   “*The Old Woman Cutting Her Nails*,”  
   Metropolitan Museum  
   “*The Supper at Emmaus*,” Louvre  
   “*The Unmerciful Servant*,” Wallace Collec-  
   tion  
   “*Woman Bathing*,” National Gallery
- Rigaud (1659–1743)** . . .   “Philippe V,” Louvre
- Cosimo Rosselli (1438–1507)** “*Pharaoh’s Destruction in the Red Sea*,”  
   Sistine Chapel
- Th. Rousseau (1812–1867)**   “*Edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau*  
   *Towards Brôle*,” Louvre
- Rubens (1577–1640)** . . .   “*Autumn, Château de Steen*,” National  
   Gallery  
   “*Judgment of Paris*,” National Gallery  
   “*Kermesse*,” Louvre  
   “*La Fuite de Loth*,” Louvre  
   “*Landscape with a Shepherd*,” National  
   Gallery  
   “*Peace and War*,” National Gallery  
   “*Portrait of Suzanne Fourment*,” Louvre  
   “*The Baron Henri de Vicq*,” Louvre  
   “*The Four Philosophers*,” Pitti  
   “*Un Tournoi*,” Louvre
- Signorelli (1441–1523)** .   “*Adoration of the Magi*,” Louvre  
   “*Moses as a Lawgiver*,” Sistine Chapel
- Terborg (1617–1681)** . . .   “*Concert*,” Louvre
- Tintoretto (1518–1594)** .   “*Crucifixion*,” Academy at Venice  
   “*Madonna with Saints*,” Academy at Venice  
   “*Origin of the Milky Way*,” National Gallery  
   “*Paradise*,” Louvre  
   “*Portrait of the Artist*,” Louvre  
   “*St. George and the Dragon*,” National  
   Gallery  
   “*Suzanne at the Bath*,” Louvre

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- Titian** (1477?-1576) . . . "Alphonse de Ferrare and Laura di Diante,"  
Louvre  
"Bacchus and Ariadne," National Gallery  
"Christ and Magdalen," National Gallery  
"Christ Crowned with Thorns," Louvre  
"Entombment," Louvre  
"Jupiter and Antiope," Louvre  
"Perseus and Andromeda," Wallace Collec-  
tion  
"Sacred and Profane Love," Borghese  
"St. John the Baptist," Academy at Venice  
"The Assumption," I Frari  
"The Man with the Glove," Louvre  
"The Supper at Emmaus," Louvre
- Turner** (1775-1851) . . . "Calais Pier," National Gallery  
"Dido Building Carthage," National Gallery  
"Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus," National  
Gallery
- Uccello** (1397-1475) . . . "The Rout of San Romano," National  
Gallery
- Van Eyck** (1385?-1441) . . . "Virgin and Donors," Louvre
- Van Loo** (1705-1765) . . . "A Halt Out Hunting," Louvre
- Velasquez** (1599-1660) . . . "Don Baltasar Carlos in Infancy," Wallace  
Collection  
"Don Baltasar Carlos in the Riding School,"  
Wallace Collection  
"Infanta Marguerita," Louvre  
"Woman with the Fan," Wallace Collection
- Verkolie** (1650-1693) . . . "Interior," Louvre
- Vermeer** (1632-1675) . . . "The Lacemaker," Louvre
- Verrocchio** (1435-1488) . . . "Baptism of Christ, with Two Angels," Uffizi
- Vivarini (Alvise)** . . . . "Madonna Enthroned, with Saints," Acad-  
(1447-1504) . . . . . emy at Venice
- Watteau** (1683-1721) . . . "Embarkation for Cythera," Louvre  
"Jupiter and Antiope," Louvre  
"La Gamme d'Amour," National Gallery



## AN OUTLINE FOR PICTURE ANALYSIS

## FOREWORD

This outline was prepared by Dr. Thomas Munro from the text of this book, and is used in his courses in art appreciation conducted by the Barnes Foundation at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and Columbia University, New York. Its primary purpose is to aid teachers in their classroom and gallery work. It consists of a list of questions designed to call the observer's attention to important qualities and relations in a picture, as well as to suggest ways of arriving at a general estimate of its achievements. The method implies a belief that appreciation and understanding are best attained, not through a vague total impression mixed with subjective feelings and reveries, but by clear and detailed perception of the elements in the work of art itself, and of their interrelations. Since it is difficult for the untrained observer to discover and appraise significant qualities, one at a time, it has been found useful to provide him, at first, with an explicit and systematic order of procedure. Later experience will enable him to decide which questions, in a particular case, are of more importance than others, deserving fuller answers, and to observe more rapidly, with less painstaking detail, but with no less fullness.

No method, of course, can by itself impart the equipment, including native sensibility, training in perception, and knowledge of the traditions of art, which is necessary to answer such questions accurately, or the fund of general experience which makes appreciation rich and vital. Many of the terms, at first seemingly vague or meaningless, will become clearer as the student notes in the text of this book their application to particular cases, and tries further applications for himself. The questions do not, of course, include all that can be significantly asked about a picture, but provide a basis for further inquiry, whose nature will be indicated by the important and distinctive aspects of the painting under observation.

In practice it has been found helpful to provide students with copies of this questionnaire, the answers to be written either in spaces left for the purpose, or, with corresponding numbers, on other pages. The instructor should go through the outline several times, before a variety of pictures, to show the connotation of the terms and specific examples of them. Later on, each student should take a particular list of paintings and, working alone, answer the questions in regard to each one. After such individual study, students should meet in discussion groups to compare their finds with regard to the same pictures. Answer sheets properly classified will

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serve as data not only on the qualities of works of art, but on the psychology of the observers.

### I. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

- A. Name of artist.
- B. Title of picture (or brief indication of subject).
- C. Approximate dates of artist and picture.
- D. Museum or collection where picture is located, and its number therein.

### II. THE DESIGN IN GENERAL

- A. What is most striking, interesting, distinctive, or unusual about the picture at first sight?
- B. What is most pleasing? most displeasing? Why?
- C. What seems to have been the chief purpose, interest, problem or general spirit of the artist in the picture (e.g., novel pattern or color relation, story-telling, moral or religious appeal)?
- D. Of what main parts or elements is the design composed?
- E. What obvious rhythms, repetitions and contrasts of theme are there (e.g., similar figures symmetrically grouped, repetition of figure and background or light and dark)?
- F. Is there enough variety to sustain interest? Is the picture rich, profuse? restricted but adequate? barren, empty? in spots or throughout? Where?
- G. In what general way are these elements put together (e.g., figures against contrasting background; pyramid or other conventional form)?
- H. Is there a definite central mass? Is there exact or approximate bilateral symmetry? Is symmetry inexact but rendered by equivalents? Is the main mass displaced? Is it brought into balanced relation again? Are these effects obvious? subtle? surprising?
- I. Do the various plastic means seem to be harmoniously related? Is any one emphasized or obviously weak?
- J. Does the design seem diffuse, scattered, disjointed? firmly integrated? Is it overcrowded, cluttered, slovenly? Has it too much content or decorative detail for structure of design to bear?
- K. What tradition, school or artist seems to have had most influence on the picture's conception? What influences or traditional forms are present in lesser degree? Do these influences seem to have been followed closely, imitatively? With what original modifications?

### III. FORM AND SUBJECT

- A. What appeal, if any, are the subject and its associations intended to exert (e.g., historical or literary episode; sentiment such as



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- erotic, maternal, domestic, patriotic, martial, religious, moral; the interest of striking personal character or physique, costumes or natural scenes)?
- B.* Are expressive values relatively minimized? Is the subject uninteresting in itself (e.g., commonplace person or still-life)? Is the picture relatively abstract? Are any definite natural objects unmistakably represented?
- C.* What kind of imaginary world is called up by the picture in its expressive functions (e.g., otherworldly, biblical, mythical, idyllic, Arcadian, elysian, romantic, adventurous, fantastic, ghostly, strange, bizarre, grotesque)? How much contact with actual human experience has that world? (e.g., is it remote, literary, theoretical, formal? unique, transitory, limited? universal, profoundly human?) Is an apparently remote subject enriched by being given vital moving power?
- D.* What mood or state of mind does the picture seek to express or produce? (E.g., pious, gay, sprightly, dignified, majestic, powerful, calm, frenzied, austere, brutal, delicate, tender, dainty, ethereal, quaint, naïve.)
- E.* What are the plastic requirements of making effective such expressive values as are intended? What aspects must be emphasized, and what omitted? (E.g., realistic portrayal of action, character, spirit of place, the essence of a situation.)
- F.* To what extent are natural appearances, laws, conventions, altered, distorted or transformed? How, especially? Does such distortion enhance the decorative power of the design? How, in general?
- G.* Does the distortion decrease some of the expressive values (e.g., make faces physically ugly)? Does it heighten the sense of deeper reality?
- H.* Is there a strong sense of the individual, distinctive identity of objects shown? Of their universal qualities, interrelations, place in nature or experience? Of the artist's own beliefs and emotional intensity, or of objective facts set down dispassionately?
- I.* Do the decorative effects in general seem to harmonize with the human values expressed? (E.g., if subject is a battle scene, does the design contribute to effect of violence? Is a quiet *genre* scene expressed with line and color more fitting to the heroic?) In what particulars? Are irrelevant or confusing details included?
- J.* In general, does the plastic form seem to fulfill the requirements (see item E) of convincing expression?
- K.* Has the picture attempted effects which could be more effectively accomplished in literature, music or some other art or medium?
- L.* What are the chief influences on choice of subject and human values to be expressed?

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### IV. LINE

#### A. Decorative qualities.

1. What linear themes recur rhythmically? Where in the picture? How are they varied? What marked contrasts are there?
2. Are these themes diffuse or integrated in a linear pattern? Thoroughly? How? Is the pattern loose? tight? regular? balanced? complex?
3. General characteristics: Is line uniform or varied? distinct, hard, sharp, clear-cut, decisive, firm, concentrated, broad, blurred, thick, soft, melting, sketchy, indecisive, wavering, broken, ragged, disappearing and reappearing, static, heavy, stable, rigid, angular, geometrical, slow, sluggish, vigorous, animated, lively, turbulent, harsh, rough, ejaculatory, staccato, swirling, arabesque, writhing, dramatic, smooth, flowing, graceful, delicate, flexible? What other qualities has it?

#### B. Expressive qualities.

1. Are contours literally reproduced? Are lines detailed, profuse, terse, simplified? Are essential parts selected for emphasis? With consequent vivid portrayal of movement? of posture? character? of physical qualities? of the substantial reality of objects?
2. Are contours distorted from natural? With what effects on realism? on pattern?
3. Does line contribute to the solidity of objects? to depth of space? How? (See sections VII and VIII.)
4. Do the qualities of line harmonize with human values of subject?

#### C. Relation to other plastic means.

1. Is line emphatic, overaccentuated, isolated, detached from other means? Is picture basically linear?
2. Is line merged with light? with color? Is it felt as part of objects?
3. Does linear pattern reinforce patterns of other means? How?
4. Does line serve to organize the whole picture? How?
5. Is drawing done by actual lines or by boundaries of color areas? by sequence and direction of masses?

#### D. What influences are present? How are they modified?

#### E. Other comments.

### V. LIGHT AND DARK.

#### A. Decorative qualities.

1. Do spots of light and dark recur rhythmically? Are they arranged in a pattern? Where and how?
2. Is there strong contrast between light and dark areas? be-



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tween different kinds of light? How? Are transitions abrupt or subtly graded?

3. Is the picture organized by light from a single source?
4. Do shadows function positively in pattern, or are they mere dead areas?

### *B.* Expressive qualities.

1. Are natural lights and shadows literally reproduced? What sort? (E.g., full sun, dim outdoor, interior, lamp.) Is there a general natural illumination?
2. Does light assist in rendering texture of surfaces? How?
3. What departures from nature are there? (E.g., are shadows eliminated or displaced?) Are aspects essential for representation selected and heightened? What effect on realism on pattern?
4. Does light contribute a distinctive emotional tone? (E.g., gloomy, eerie, dramatic, peaceful, romantic, gay.) How?
5. Is the effect in general powerful, weak, melodramatic, flashy, cheap, restrained, economical, subtle, delicate, rich, glamorous? What other qualities?
6. Are light and shadow used in modeling? (See section VII.)

### *C.* Relation to other plastic means.

1. Is light emphasized? with spotlight effect? How? Is it isolated, superficially laid on?
2. Is it merged with line? Are contours blurred or sharpened by shadow? Is light pervasive or shut between lines?
3. Do light and shade accentuate other patterns? by accentuating main features?
4. Is light merged with color? to form pervasive atmosphere? (See section VI.) Are tonal variations made to function as color?

### *D.* What influences? How modified?

### *E.* Other comments.

## VI. COLOR.

### *A.* Decorative qualities.

1. Are spots of same or similar colors repeated rhythmically? How are they varied?
2. What main contrasts in color occur? Are transitions abrupt and striking or gradual? Is the range of hues profuse or restricted?
3. Are spots of color organized into chords? into subordinate and comprehensive units? harmonized with adjacent areas? with remoter areas? integrated throughout into a pattern? How? Is the pattern diffuse and chaotic? partly integrated, with dead or unrelated spots?

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4. Does the color seem to be a superficial accessory, laid on after the picture has been conceived in other terms? Is it thin, dull, bare, perfunctory, barren, monotonous? Is it varied by and merged with light and line, so that it seems part of the organic structure of objects? Is light gradation minute and detailed or broad and loose?
5. Are individual areas of color sensuously displeasing or uninteresting by themselves (e.g., acid, arid, muddy, dingy, drab)? If so, are they more effective in relation to each other? to adjacent or remoter areas? by some expressive value? How? Are the areas, seen individually, rich in surface quality? varied in hues, tints, values? iridescent, luminous, velvety? enamel- or porcelain-like? Is this effect secured in part by light? Is the surface juicy, oily, dry, pastel or fresco-like?
6. Is the general effect of the colors in combination prevailingly warm or cool? brilliant, intense, bright, vivid, exotic, barbaric, pageant-like, somber, dark, dull, overbrilliant, flashy, garish, strident, gaudy, tinselly, shiny, tawdry, chromo-like? By what general means are these effects produced? (E.g., brilliancy and animation by juxtaposing small spots of unmixed contrasting color, with visible brush-strokes.)
7. Are shadows dead, murky? rich and active as color? lustrous, velvety? Why? Are they made by darker shades of same hues as in high-lights, or by contrasting hues?
8. Are colors inclosed by linear contours in tight compartments? Are they hard, metallic, eggshell-like? Do they overflow boundaries, with a fluid, melting, swimming effect? Are line and color merged?
9. Are colors combined and modified with light to form a pervasive, circumambient atmosphere? Is this atmosphere hazy, misty, suffused, clear, limpid, crystalline, fresh, jewel-like, glowing, golden, silvery, effulgent, lustrous, shimmering, scintillating? Does the atmosphere serve to unify all parts of picture?

### *B.* Expressive qualities.

1. Are color variations on surfaces reproduced with literal detail, or broadly?
2. Are colors selectively heightened, subdued, or otherwise altered from nature?
3. If so, with effect of increasing their decorative qualities? How?
4. With effect of portraying essential substance, structure and important qualities of objects as known by experience? How?



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5. Do qualities of color contribute to a distinctive emotional state (e.g., peaceful, commonplace, dramatic, violent, brutal, fantastic, weird, gloomy, gay)?

C. What influences?

D. Other comments.

### VII. SOLIDITY.

A. Do objects appear flat or solid? completely? dense or rarefied? In what way? (E.g., diaphanous, colossal, fragile, fleshlike, rock-like.) Do different objects in the picture vary in these respects? Why? (E.g., to distribute weight or emphasize important objects.)

B. How are the effects of thickness and density secured? (E.g., by actual impasto, approaching bas-relief; by perspective of linear contours; by shadows that are tonal variations of high-lights; by shadows that are contrasting colors; by modulation through juxtaposing small spots of contrasting colors.)

C. Are the thickness and density of objects reproduced accurately as in nature? (E.g., do human bodies seem plastery, pasty, brittle? textiles wooden? flowers and fruit metallic?)

D. If not, is distortion from nature in interest of design? How? (E.g., are muscles accentuated for sake of light and shade pattern? Is this effect repeated in other parts of picture? Does flatness bring out linear sharpness or color contrast?) Are objects thoroughly dissociated into basic planes and recombined?

E. Is the distortion in interest of bringing out some qualities of object as known by experience or association? (E.g., muscular accentuation for sense of power.) Is it for a heightened sense of underlying reality?

F. Does the emphasis on solidity seem excessive or unrelated to other plastic means?

G. What influences? How modified?

H. Other comments.

### VIII. DEPTH.

A. Do all objects appear to be on surface of canvas, or is there an effect of deep space? Does the picture seem roomy? airy?

B. If picture is approximately flat, to what extent do any areas appear to advance or recede? Because of color? Light and dark?

C. If there is a pronounced effect of varying distance and deep space, how is it attained, and how successfully? (E.g., by converging perspective lines? in an obvious, geometrical way? by overlapping of objects? by alternate receding planes of light and dark? by series of contrasting color areas?) Is there any pervasive color atmosphere filling space? by making some objects

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- smaller, darker, dimmer, or hazier than others? Are distant objects rendered with minute detail or broadly?
- D.* Are objects arranged at rhythmic intervals in deep space? to form a unified pattern? Are intervals subdivided and interrelated in many different planes? Is each object in its own definite space, or are relative positions vague?
- E.* Are perspective and natural spatial relations rendered literally as they appear in nature? slightly or thoroughly distorted? Is the naturalistic representation of foreground, middleground and distance disturbed? How? (E.g., by bringing distant objects to top of picture.) How do these distortions affect the design? How do they effect expressive realism?
- F.* What influences? How modified?
- G.* Other comments.

### IX. UNITY OF DESIGN: SUMMARY.

- A.* Are the various subordinate patterns, made by each of the plastic means, firmly integrated into a total design? How?
- B.* After detailed analysis, does any one of the plastic means seem to be emphasized more than others? If so, what is the effect? (E.g., hard, sharp quality from emphasis on line.)
- C.* Is the picture constructed with economy of means? Do the various plastic means and parts of picture work together to a harmonious effect? Which, if any, are inactive or conflicting? How? Are certain factors more harmonious together than others?
- D.* Does the emphasis lie on pattern and decorative values? on expressive human values? Which are more successfully achieved? Does either set of values seem to be overemphasized in relation to the other, or detached from it?
- E.* In general, to what extent are the intended expressive values successfully conveyed in plastic terms? Is the intended mood, feeling, idea, world of imagination effectively called up? If not, what effect does this failure produce? (E.g., artificiality, trickiness, cheapness, triviality, ostentation, grandiosity, flabbiness, oversentimentality, sugariness, insipidity.) What demonstrable facts in the picture are most important in leading to this verdict?
- F.* Which of the observed weaknesses, uninteresting or displeasing aspects in the picture are necessary in the interest of its main purpose or total effect?
- G.* What, after analysis, is most pleasing about the picture? most displeasing? What estimate can be formed of the picture's probable ability to retain its moving power after longer experience, and for people of different environments?



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*H.* How is the picture to be evaluated in terms of intelligent use and original transformation of influences? Does it follow one tradition narrowly? Is it eclectic without new integration? Does it attenuate and weaken past traditions? Is it genuinely creative, original, distinctive? In what chief respects? How extensive and important would you judge these new advances to be, and for what reasons?

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